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*Meditations on the
Gospel of St. John*



Canon Edward West

Meditations on the
Gospel of St. John

Harper & Brothers, New York



MEDITATIONS ON THE GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN

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WILLIAM THOMAS MANNING

*courageous and proud in See; meek and lowly in heart
whose whole life was the continuation of his first
meditation on these words from a great Collect*

CONSTANTLY SPEAK THE TRUTH,
BOLDLY REBUKE VICE, AND PATIENTLY
SUFFER FOR THE TRUTH'S SAKE
MEMORY ETERNAL



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PREFACE

MARK BARR once said that mathematics was devised to keep facts in abeyance while men examined dispassionately the relations of these facts, because the question contains the answer, "Remember that research is very often a seeking of the question to an answer." If this be true of the strict science of mathematics, it is equally true of the Christian religion. Christianity, in common with its ancient mother, Israel, regards the answers which man needs to know as available; the only problem is to find the right questions to ask.

It used to be believed in this country that various Oriental peoples held weird theories about the moon and what made it move. Actually they saw the same things all the rest of us saw. Their problem was not the facts, but asking the right questions about the facts. Christianity, like Judaism, is a religion of facts. It is concerned with the

mighty acts of God. These are the facts. The problem is to get these facts in a setting which will permit them to make the right answers clear to us.

Of all the books in the New Testament, the Gospel according to St. John is the one containing the largest number of spiritual facts. This Gospel is concerned with the mind of Christ as that mind has shown itself in terms of Christian living. The mind which was in Christ Jesus manifested itself in a community and that continuing community, broadly understood, contains all the questions to which that mind is the answer. The book differs from the other Gospels markedly. The other Gospels are intimate, chatty, snapshot-laden accounts of Jesus of Nazareth as he seemed to the people of his country. As is often true in taking candid camera shots, lighting and exposure determined the results. Two different men from two different positions will photograph a man at the same time. The results can be so different as to be scarcely recognizable as photographs of the same person.

St. John is not in the slightest degree concerned with this form of picturing. He is involved in producing a portrait which, granted any light at all,

will invariably read the same way. He is concerned with what was going on in the mind of Christ during his earthly sojourn. The editor of the book showed his skill in the assembling of the material. As he himself points out, the material available was so much more than adequate that the world itself could not contain the number of books which might be written were all of it to be used.

There is in this book firsthand material transparently more reliable than that used by any other biographer. There is a collection of liturgical sermons appropriate to the great spiritual events in human life. There is mystical prayer in its highest form. Out of all of this abundance the portrait was painted. It is a portrait intended for use in connection with the timeless problems of living the Christian life in a world which, as far as it knows, neither wants nor respects Christian standards. The answers are all there. The problem is, as always, to match them up with the right questions.

For the purposes of these meditations, the questions—important for other purposes—concerning the identity of apostle and editor are not touched on. These meditations are attempts to

gain from the Gospel, just as it stands in the New Testament, a contemporary insight into the answers available to the right questions. Great scholars and great saints have produced readings and meditations on this Gospel. Christianity is always concerned with the truth absorbed into one's own self. In that sense, and in that sense only, I presume to add my own gleanings.

E. W.



*Meditations on the
Gospel of St. John*



IN THE BEGINNING *was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. . . . That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. . . . And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses, but grace*

and truth came by Jesus Christ. No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.

» I «

Light and Darkness

THE ORDINARY first-century Greek who heard or read this great hymn to the Word had a number of associations in his mind. Common or garden-variety philosophy would have taught him to recognize that the phrase "in the beginning" could, just as easily, be "at the beginning," so that even he understood from this phrase something to the effect that at the center of everything there is, and always has been, some form of communication between the creator and the created. Just as in one's own experience one man will make his ideas known to another man through the medium of a series of words, so the mind behind the universe makes itself known through its Word. It is the one way the mind of God and the power of God may be known. The Word was in God, part of God, identical with

God. It communicated life and light. Through it, all things were created.

All the things we associate with the word "light" are centered in this Word—reason, communicability and universal generosity. It is the one and only source of truth and therefore anything even remotely true has the Word as its originator.

This fact is so much more important than most people think that it must needs be labored a bit. If some great Oriental sage produced a magnificent piece of thinking which involved real truth, that truth has only one source, and that is Truth itself. Truth must be recognized as such, however distasteful the medium may be through which that truth has come. Behind the French Revolution, with all of its excesses and horrors, truth was lurking. Behind the wickedness of civil war, with brother killing brother, truth can be perceived. The Word is such that even the anger of sinful men can be made to serve it. Thus, wherever the goodness of God is shown, we must cope with it; it has but one source. The common denominators of healing, for example, are God's will to heal and man's faith in God's power to heal. This simplicity

may be disguised under trappings either strange or familiar, but the basic facts remain and we must recognize them. Miracles of healing prove only these common denominators. They do not prove the exclusive rightness of the individual institution or medium concerned. So, if, in the remotest corner of the world, a man who has never heard of Christianity is healed seemingly by his belief in some god whom we might by definition regard as almost a devil, the common denominators are still there.

The Word is life and light, absolutely universal, lightening every man who comes into the world. The ancient fathers of the Church were fully aware of this fact and they could, according to their knowledge, use gladly any immediate source of truth in full knowledge that the ultimate source was one. Whether it be the pagan poets, or the pagan oracles, or the great prophets of the Old Testament, truth must be recognized and reclaimed for itself.

Persecution made the Church grow in on itself with the inevitable result that it became less generous. Miracles then came to be regarded as

authentic only if the immediate sources were orthodox. This was not, is not, and never will be the Church at its best.

Up to this point the word "miracles" has been used several times and it is probably necessary to make clear what we mean by it. To change a stone into bread is not a miracle but sacrilege. A miracle is an act of God revealing truth about himself not previously known.

To return to the central theme, this light, which lightens everybody, shines in darkness and the darkness never quite manages to swallow it up. We are confronted at once with the strange fact that Christianity is not really concerned with metaphysics. Where did the darkness come from? Who made the darkness? These are questions which simply did not concern either the Hebrew or the Christian. Darkness is just a fact, an unpleasant fact, with which God has dealt. It must be remembered, however, that even if they were not concerned with the source of darkness, the early Christians were most awfully concerned with the darkness itself. Darkness was regarded as active, determined of itself to swallow up the light, malevolent, wicked, and just as much concerned with

man's destruction as God was with man's salvation. Darkness was not just an absence of light, impersonal and unconcerned. It was a miry black thing, hating the light.

Some years ago, a friend and I witnessed a Nazi mass meeting in Munich. That experience was to see darkness at work. A carefully studied technique, superb showmanship and boundless malice could turn a crowd of attractive, pleasant Bavarians into a mob, bent on the destruction of any Jewish establishment it could find. This happened in Germany but it has happened in many other places since then. It can still happen. To marvel at the fact that so much darkness does not swallow up the pitifully small amount of light is to forget the source of light.

Up to this point, most Western people can agree with St. John, but from here on none but the Christian will make the slightest sense out of what he has to say. The Word came into the world, a world made by it, and the world did not recognize it. The Word came to its own chosen people, and was not received. The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us full of grace and truth.

It is at this point that St. John becomes involved

with the central fact of Christianity. The light and communicability of God was made flesh and lived among us. This is the only miracle worth worrying about. If the incarnation (the in-fleshing of God) be believed, then all other miracles can be verified only in terms of their moral usefulness, never in terms of their probability, much less in terms of their possibility. Our criterion of moral usefulness is the incarnate One's own account of his temptations—no stones into bread, no cheap wonder working, no compromise with darkness.

This is the staggering claim of Christianity, that the fullness of eternity, life, and light itself walked this earth in a particular country at a particular time and in a particular man, Jesus of Nazareth. It is not as though the timeless One had determined at a particular time to have a son. It is rather that the timeless One's timeless Son, his Word, took flesh and came among us.

Archbishop Temple points out that the word "flesh" is particularly appropriate in that this is the least dignified description of humanity. Flesh is, to most people, a description of man at his most sordid; and that is the Christian religion. It is light

shining in darkness, demonstrating what flesh was originally put here for.

The greatest of Christian preachers, St. John Chrysostom, once wrote: "Yea, it was for this cause he came, not to escape our disgraces, but to bear them away. . . . It is not only because he took flesh upon him, and became man, that we justly stand amazed at him, but because he vouchsafed to have also such kinsfolk, being in no respect ashamed of our evils. And this he was proclaiming from the very beginnings of his birth, that he is ashamed of none of those things that belong to us."

It is only in this setting that one starts to understand the completeness of the humanity which the Word of God took on. Humanity tested in all things like as we, but without sin. There is one prayer from the Ambrosian Rite which sums up the whole thing: "O God, who didst wonderfully create and still more marvelously renew the dignity of human nature, grant . . . that we may become partakers of the divinity of him who, for our sakes, partook of our humanity." The light can enter into any kind of darkness and triumph. This

gospel is the account of the Christian family's absorption into light, how you and I can be in Christ.

The incarnation, the mightiest act of God, is the answer. It is now, as it has been for nineteen centuries, the answer to the pathetic questions of mankind: How long will the ungodly triumph? Can any oppressive government rule the minds and hearts of men for a thousand years? Is there one human being in the world of no value to either God or man? Does God really care? Is there any purpose behind all of our striving and our hurt? Is time real?

He brought light out of darkness, not out of a lesser light; He can bring thy summer out of winter, though thou have no spring; though in the ways of fortune, or understanding, or conscience, thou have been benighted till now, wintered and frozen, clouded and eclipsed, damped and benumbed, smothered and stupefied till now, now God comes to thee, not as the dawning of the day, not as in bud of spring—but as the sun at noon.

John Donne, *Sermon II*



AND THE THIRD DAY *there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there: And both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage. And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come. His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it. And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece. Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it. When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was, (but the servants which drew the water knew,) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom, and saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until*

now. This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him.

➤➤ II ➤➤

Human Pleasure

THE ACCOUNT of the marriage feast in Cana of Galilee has caused so much hardship to puritans that they have, over the centuries, and in every church, sought to explain the story away either by allegory or by treating it all as highly involved symbolism. The account is put at this point in the Gospel to demonstrate the mind of Christ on the subject of marriage and human happiness. It is not for nothing that the early Church composed a hymn entitled, "Phos Hilaron"—"O Joyous Radiance."

The setting is not one to make a John the Baptist very happy, nor, one fears, would it give unqualified pleasure to St. Paul. It is at the third day of an Oriental marriage feast and the wine has all

been drunk. This is the culmination of events guaranteed to upset any puritan in any age.

Marriage, with its inevitable association with the flesh, had for centuries been regarded as a slightly unclean thing, at very best a concession to human weakness. The primitive rules set up to guard a woman's health had come to mean periodic uncleanness, which was defiling to all. After childbirth, women had come to be regarded as unclean until purification ceremonies were performed. Thus the beauty of the simple Hebrew marriage ceremony was in practice clouded by an underlying conviction that there was something wrong about the whole thing. The original joy of a marriage feast continued, but few serious-minded people would regard attendance at it as a useful occupation.

The early Church had some people in it who believed that all sin came through the body, that the soul was good and the body bad. Indeed, God had created the soul, but the devil had created the body. If one is going to lie, one has to use one's mouth. If one is going to steal, one has to use one's hands, and so on. Therefore anything which either

tended to perpetuate the production of bodies, or which could be regarded as giving the bodies any pleasure, had to be regarded as sinful and was to be avoided.

Into this setting came the "Joyous Radiance" to bless marriage with his presence, and human pleasure by his participation. In the Book of Common Prayer there is a beautiful phrase describing marriage as a state "which Christ adorned and beautified with his presence and first miracle that he wrought in Cana of Galilee." This is exactly what happened.

The third day of the feast had found the wine all gone and the mother of Jesus points this out to her son. The customary phrase he uses in reply has caused a great deal of heart-searching to good people because it sounds either stuffy or rude. "Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour hath not yet come." The intent of the phrase is of course, "It's all right, it isn't time yet." Possibly, the word "woman" is best translated as "ma'am," if there are any children left who still say, "Yes, ma'am" and "No, ma'am."

The six waterpots of stone were tremendous

and therefore held a very large amount of liquid. Jesus ordered the servants to fill them up and they filled them to the brim. Then he directed them to take some of the wine to the governor of the feast, a sort of Oriental form of toastmaster, and they did so. The point of the governor's statement to the bridegroom becomes clear if great emphasis is put on the word "man." "Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now." This is irony in its classic form. Man does just as the governor said. Most hosts and hostesses have met, and continue to meet, the problem in the way the governor outlines, but God does just the reverse. Things do not get weaker, they get stronger with God. The meaning of the story is clear. Human pleasure becomes greater, not less, in the presence of Christ, and marriage becomes a stronger and not a weaker love as time goes on.

Christianity has absolutely no sense of humor whatsoever about marriage. Possibly a sense of humor is the wrong phrase to use. It might be better to say that Christianity is in deadly earnest

about marriage. The statue of a saint may be broken and the religious sensibilities of people will be offended, but more statues can be made. A cross may be used as a tack hammer, and Christians will be singularly unamused, but it is, after all, not permanent damage save possibly to the soul of the man who does that sort of thing. The family, however, is the living icon of God himself. The family shares his community of Persons. It is endowed by him with his own creative power. To mar or deface the living image of God is an act of iconoclasm which the Church regards as the ultimate sacrilege.

It is because of the mind of Christ that marriages are now regarded as lifelong unions of free and equal persons. Were men and women not free to act, were they not equally persons, then however marriage might be defined, it certainly could not be defined as a union. In Christian marriage, the marriage feast in Cana of Galilee is always behind the action. The invited presence of Christ means the conscious taking on of Christian love on top of the other loves which are common to humanity.

The Greek language is a very rich one and the various kinds of love are clear in that tongue. There are the loves rooted in good will and affection, from which we get words like “philanthropy”—the love of mankind, or “philadelphia”—the love of brethren. There are adjectives derived from the Greek word for another kind of love, “eros,” which ordinarily describes love between the sexes. But the word used in the New Testament to describe Christian love has almost no equivalent in English. “Charity” as a word has too many chilly associations; “love” as a word is not very satisfactory to our people, since it is used commonly to describe any emotion, from filial affection to an attitude about apple pie. A small boy loves his mother, loves ice cream and loves baseball. The Greek word for Christian love was “agape” and this described a profound concern for the welfare of another without any desire to control that other, to be thanked by that other, or to enjoy the process.

This is the kind of love Christians are talking about and this is the kind of love which must be overlaid on all other kinds if a marriage or a fam-

ily is to be happy. Most of us know tragic examples of a parental love which has ruined both parent and child—because there was no “agape.” “Do this because I say so” may be salutary in the disciplining of a small child, but it stands a good chance of being fatal in choosing a vocation for a grown man. “I have done all of this for you; can’t you even do this little thing for me?” may get the thing done, but it will move the doer even further away from any possible outpouring of real gratitude, that spontaneous response of a generous heart. These are common infractions of the law of Christian love but each contains the seed of tragedy.

Christian love is like the Person who gave it. It suffers long and is kind. It does not envy nor boast. It never seeks its own, is not easily provoked, thinks no evil, rejoices in the truth, bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. It never fails.

Ordinary human pleasure is not only an acceptable thing, it is a great thing. Much has been written about the necessity of having a sense of humor but too often the implication has been that people

should be good storytellers or humorously gay all the time. Such a notion serves better to describe a public menace than a man with a sense of humor. Humor may be either good or bad. It means nothing other than a disposition of mind or feeling. So to have the thing mean anything, we would have to say that it was a sense of good humor which was needed.

Good humor in a Christian invariably turns out to be a happy attitude about one's own relative importance in any given situation. Thus, a Christian is able to laugh at himself because, among other things, he is perfectly sure that he has a self to laugh at. It is stoicism rather than Christianity which is responsible for the grin-and-bear-it school of thought. The religious sense of good humor has often been identified with true humility, and this is worth remembering. The phrase, "I am a worm and no man," when all is said and done, could only be uttered by a man. Observations on the relative unimportance of human beings can still be made only by human beings.

Christian good humor shows itself at its best in phrases such as: "We may be poor servants and

unprofitable, but we serve a great master." It should be recognized that in areas where it counts Christianity is incurably optimistic. I say "areas where it counts" because the Christian is not naïve enough to think that the world is exactly nineteen hundred years better than St. Paul, nor is he trivial about the tragedy and pain of a war-scarred world. The areas which count are the eternal ones, where victory is on the side of God and his Christ.

I believe all of this because I have seen ordinary men and women become saints. They, of course, being saints, never knew they had any effect on me. It is the only permanent form of evangelism I know.



THERE WAS a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit. Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be? Jesus answered and said unto him,

Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things? And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven. . . . For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour. There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink. (For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.) Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. Jesus

answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle? Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw. Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither. The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband: For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly. The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet

at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. The woman saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he.

» III «

Human Ignorance

NICODEMUS WAS a man whose attitude most of us know only too well. Prudent, cautious, he comes to Jesus by night to have a conversation about the things which trouble him. Nicodemus is, in this instance, taking the characteristic don't-quote-me attitude common to so many leaders. It would not do for a man of his position to be seen coming to Jesus, so he arranges a private, discreet interview. He is concerned about unauthorized miracles. He is honest enough to admit that Jesus must be a teacher come from God, but, on the other hand, as a ruler of the Jews, he is upset by the cleansing of the Temple and the open defiance of the Temple authorities. Jesus ignores all of the talk about miracles and comes straight to the point. "Except

a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

The word “kingdom” is a slightly unfortunate translation, for the original meant more the “sovereignty” of God, whereas most people think of a kingdom as a place. This is nothing new, because the very people who put Jesus to death worked on the theory that the kingdom of God is a place. The kingdom for Jesus is a spiritual matter.

Man is born into this world a natural creature already heavily bound by the corporate decisions of his ancestors. He *exists*, but *life* is a somewhat different matter. Life is something which has to be approached spiritually even to be seen. Rebirth through the spirit is what Jesus offers; this rebirth is life eternal, here and now. Until a man believes, he does not even see life.

Nicodemus is upset, and asks a gently ironic question, Can a man “enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born?” Jesus replies that “that which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” He immediately likens the moving of the spirit to the sound of the wind. One cannot tell from the sound in

which direction it is blowing, and so it is with the spirit. A man that is born into life is born into freedom. The rules of the spirit are not the rules of the earth nor of the earthbound.

This is a most troublesome saying and it has continued to bother many people other than Nicodemus. Western Christianity has time and again tried to fetter the spirit by the canon law of this world, and every time this has been attempted the Spirit of God has prevailed, sometimes inside and sometimes outside the official bounds of Christianity. The Spirit will never leave himself without a witness, and if the Church fails him a witness will rise up outside the Church and the Church will stand under judgment for it.

Nicodemus' pathetic question, "How can these things be?" is the time-honored complaint of an honest man who would like to have God run a little more according to schedule. The answer is, of course, clear. God runs according to schedule, but it is his schedule and not man's. The ignorance of Nicodemus is met with irony: "Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?" Jesus goes on to tell him that since he does not believe

things out of his earthly experience, there is small point in pursuing the subject along spiritual lines.

The conclusion of the passage is the revelation of the mind of Christ on the subject of the world. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved."

In most places St. John treats the world as an enemy, but this is because of the way it acts, not because it was created as an evil thing. The Word made all things. Therefore all things can be of service to him. These two sentences are the guarantee of the world's place in God's thinking. The world, for the Christian, is not the result of some cosmic accident. It is not a ball given an original push by a celestial bowler who then gave it no more thought. It is not a rival kingdom built by outraged demons. It is a fair place, created by a good and compassionate Being; as the winsome phrase in Genesis says: "God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good."

What man has done to this world has not been good. He has even managed to pervert nature itself. A dust bowl is as much a problem in morality as it is in agronomy. Human beings are left with appendixes which are no longer useful because of change of diet. Human beings are now afflicted with all sorts of neuroses largely unknown to their ancestors. And it is into such a world that we are born. Decisions made centuries ago determine the color of our skin, the diseases to which we are heir, and the fears to which we are prey. All the somewhat confusing talk about original sin means just this—that man is born into, and is heir of, a world grown deadly by man's own considered choice.

The person who looks around and sees suffering and misfortune all around him, and even for one moment rebels and feels that things ought not to be this way, has, even if only for that moment, answered the deep call of the Spirit of God. Man ought to live rather than exist.

The woman of Samaria was in some ways easier to deal with than Nicodemus. She was not only a simple and unimaginative person, but, also, "no

better than she should be.” Jesus is sitting by a well and he asks her for a drink of water. She reacts as any other person of a despised minority would. It is a barbed question, “How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria?” (How is it that you, a Jew, would condescend to ask a drink of me, when I am a Samaritan?) Jesus, as usual, dismisses the problem of his physical welfare for the sake of another’s spiritual need. His meat and drink was to do the will of him that sent him and to finish the work laid upon him. He points out to her that if she had known who it was who asked for a drink she would have in turn asked for living water, a water that whosoever drinketh shall never thirst. The woman misunderstands the application. She thinks he is talking about self-filling water pots, whereas he is talking about eternity.

In addition, he tells her a few pertinent facts about herself, and she, such is the honesty of her kind, is not at all upset. She recognizes him for a prophet and immediately poses the favorite problem between Samaritans and Jews. Should God be worshiped in Jerusalem or in Samaria? Jesus re-

plies that the time will come when worship will be confined to neither Jerusalem nor Samaria. True worshipers shall then worship the Father in spirit and in truth, two things which are confined to no one locality.

It is interesting to note his defense of Israel, since this gospel is not particularly pro-Jewish in its emphasis. "Ye worship ye know not what"—a tragically accurate description of Samaritan religion. "We know what we worship; for salvation is of the Jews."

Christianity owes an endless debt to Israel. Most of the public ministry of Jesus was the fulfilling of the law and the prophets of ancient Israel. The ministry of John the Baptist was a Hebrew ministry. The background thinking which prepared the way for a Messiah was purely Hebrew, indeed the very word itself was produced among God's chosen people. Israel, of all ancient nations, saw most clearly the hand of God in all his works. No other nation in the religious history of mankind so thoroughly identified the majesty and splendor of nature's violent manifestations with the overarching providence of the glorious God that maketh the

thunder. At the conclusion of the great hymn of the thunderstorm (Psalm 29), after commenting fully on all the destruction, an Israelite could write: "The Lord will give strength unto his people; the Lord will bless his people with peace." Through exile, through torture and persecution Israel always had a faithful remnant, "Salvation is of the Jews." Jesus was born of them.

The woman goes on to make the other favorite religious observation of the time: When the Messiah comes, he will explain everything. Jesus says, "I that speak unto thee am he." The woman put up no argument. She just went back and told everybody all about it.

It is a tragic comment on education that the simple Samaritan woman went off convinced by what she saw and heard, while the ruler of the Jews was only confused because the new information did not fit the pattern of his preconceived notions.

God so often calls us to a great work by showing us a simple need, but it is hard for us to accept the call unless it comes through sources we regard as regular.

Too many of us are still preoccupied with the

right place to worship God. Too many of us still say that if only Christ would speak to us we would know what to do. He speaks, he calls, but we do not recognize that it is he.

“Why can’t I do some great and noble work instead of the endless round of inconsequential chores which go with my daily life?” The awful truth is that Christ can make my work great and important in just so far as I let him make my chores consequential.

The Word made all things. Therefore all things can be of service.



SO JESUS CAME AGAIN *into Cana of Galilee, where he made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum. When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judea into Galilee, he went unto him, and besought him that he would come down, and heal his son: for he was at the point of death. Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe. The nobleman saith unto him, Sir, come down ere my child die. Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way. And as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told him, saying, Thy son liveth. Then inquired he of them the hour when he began to amend. And they said unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him. So the father knew that it was at the same hour, in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth: and himself believed, and his whole house.*

Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda,

having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had. And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years. When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole? The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me. Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the sabbath.

And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night

cometh, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing.

» IV «

Human Affection

A DYING CHILD, an infirm man and a blind man all need help. In no single case does the individual himself come to Jesus to ask for help. In the case of the nobleman's son the father did the asking. The common denominator is, however, the usual one: God's will to heal and man's conviction that God can heal.

When one reads the Gospels as continuous reading, rather than in appropriate pious snippets, it is astonishing to see how much healing went on. An early Christian church was ordinarily known as a temple of healing, rivaling even the temples of Aesculapius. The great and manifest claim of the early church was that Jesus of Nazareth not only healed during the Incarnation, but continued to heal the souls and bodies of men, and still heals.

Whenever the Church has forgotten this, the Spirit of God has raised up people outside the Church to remember it. God's will always is to heal, but he has so set up the rule that human co-operation is needed.

As soon as we start talking about rules we must be careful to keep clear the fact that God is not one who can be approached only in terms of some kind of magic formula or incantation, popularly known as prayer. God does not have to be persuaded to help. His attitude toward men is not one of passive good will but one of the active seeking out of those who need him and will receive him.

The common purpose of much intercessory prayer is the persuading of oneself that God should be permitted to do something. This is of course an oversimplification, but it at least avoids the notion that God is something like an elderly matron who would be delighted to come to tea if anyone remembered to ask her—Jesus never heard of a Father such as that. It is the Father's good will which keeps the universe running.

To convey the proper sense of Jesus' comment on the matter, one would have to translate it, My

Father has never stopped working and neither do I. Every instinct of the ordinary human mind is to keep God within bounds; and he simply will not keep within bounds. The Hebrews had been given the blessing of the Sabbath, a day set apart by God for man's refreshment, rest and meditation—a Sabbath which gave rest even to the animals. This had been turned around so that the Sabbath had become oppressive by the sheer weight of things which might not be done. Even human kindness had dropped out.

We should remember that this tendency is not exclusively Jewish. Men have been imprisoned, tortured and executed in the name of the Jesus who came that men might have life and have it more abundantly. We do not need to rely exclusively on the medieval or Renaissance period of European history for examples; in our American colonies there was no single religious group which did not in some place, or at some time, suffer at the hands of some other religious group. Somewhere along the way human affection and human kindness had been forgotten in the development of ecclesiastical systems.

This statement will only sound like some attack on official religion if we have overlooked the fact that official religion depends on us; we are the Church. The very reason I can make these observations about human kindness is because the Church has preserved the Holy Scriptures free of meddling and still continues, in spite of most of us, to produce saints who make the love of God real in the lives of men.

God will act whether the right words or the wrong words are used, whether it be on the Hebrew Sabbath or the Puritan Sabbath. God will act whether the Inquisition or the Star Chamber approve or not. It is useful to remember that the same thing goes for the physicians, the teachers and the statesmen of the world.

A father caring deeply for his son comes to Jesus to have him healed. Jesus tests him in his usual way. The man had come to Jesus as a last resort. Everything else had failed and this might work. There is no problem in the mind of Jesus. The problem is in the nobleman's mind and there has to be a solution. Jesus says,

“Except you see signs and wonders you won't

believe.” The decision is made immediately. The nobleman says,

“Sir, come down before my child dies.”

It was the response that was needed. Jesus says, “You go back, your son will live.”

The man believes it and does it.

After a while, the nobleman meets servants from home to tell him that the boy is all right. The father checks carefully on the time—a very nice point and one for which I am always grateful. God himself does not ask man to abandon his reason in order to be religious. It was the right time and so the whole household is won over.

The Pool of Bethesda was famous for its healing properties. When the fresh springs flowed through it, it was assumed that an angel was disturbing the water and the tradition was that the first man who stepped in was made well no matter what the disease from which he had been suffering. The healing properties of the springs and a firm belief in the tradition would of necessity produce many cures, always remembering that in its simplest form this is a healing direct from God.

Jesus sees a man there who has been sick thirty-

eight years, and asks if he wants to be made well. The sick man explains that he is so weak that someone else always gets in the pool before him. Jesus then reduces religion to its first principle. Jesus says, "Rise, take up your pallet and walk," and immediately the man was made whole and took up his bed and walked.

Then comes the trouble; this healing had taken place on the Sabbath. God had sought out and healed one who was sick, but the religious people of the day objected to the action of God because it was not according to the rules. Thirty-eight years of misery ended, and the only comment is, "It is not lawful for you to carry a bed today"!

The notion that God himself helps only the good is a frightful piece of ecclesiastical conceit. It is clear enough a few sentences later that this man was not particularly good. Jesus says, "Sin no more, or something worse will happen to you." Surely the lot of us who know something of the hand of Providence in our lives can appreciate this sentence. It certainly was not because we were good that we were helped.

At another time Jesus is passing by and he sees

a man who suffered from congenital blindness. The disciples ask who is responsible for the blindness, and the answer is that it is not the result of anybody's sin but rather that the works of God should be made manifest in him. This sentence has not only carried a number of parents through the grim moments following the birth of a handicapped child, but has also provided countless thousands of others with the only abiding reason for the care of the afflicted. These afflictions were not any individual's fault. They were just the sad facts of life, but in common with all other sad facts of life they were opportunities for the manifestation of God's power. Terribly crippled men have manifested the power of God in profound research and scholarship. Helpless suffering humanity has called forth from others the noblest responses which have ever moved the hearts of men.

Christianity is a factual religion and the wonderful operations now performed by the great eye surgeons have their foundation in a human kindness which believes that people ought not to be blind, which in turn has its foundation in the infinite compassion of God. I am not talking about the dis-

eases which sin can cause. That is a different problem; I am talking about the universal call of pitiable human beings.

Christianity, as a factual religion, is concerned with what God does about things. Life is basically simple, and only ceases to be so when we complicate it. It takes no effort to get God's help; rather it takes effort to resist it. Whether it be a dying child, or a sick man, or a blind man, the urgency to help is laid upon us. We only have to face the fact that God will use the method he chooses. Help may be given through medicine, or social service, or prayer, individually or collectively. The important thing is that the Physician and Healer of our souls and bodies seeks ways to help all of his children, and therefore reveals more and more the ways in which his children can be helped. The common denominators are God's will to heal, man's belief that he can be healed, and the human affection which wants him healed.

There is a touchingly beautiful set of phrases which Cranmer wrote for the Ordinal:

*Search for the sick, poor and impotent people
... seek for Christ's sheep that are dispersed*

abroad . . . hold up the weak, heal the sick, bind up the broken, bring again the outcasts, seek the lost.

One may exist without doing any of these things, but one may not live if one of them be neglected. They are the affections binding upon all Christ's people.

O Lord, who dost call us to minister to the souls and bodies of thy people, grant us, in moments of weariness with well-doing, the grace to remember that the most sorry and abused body is yet a temple of thine all-holy and life-giving Spirit, a frame for the image of God.



AFTER THESE THINGS *Jesus went over to the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias. And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were diseased. And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there he sat with his disciples. And the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh. When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little. One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him, There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many? And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them*

that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would. When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost. Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten. Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.

And when they had found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when camest thou hither? Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled. Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed. Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent. They said therefore unto him, What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work? Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is

written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat. Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not. All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.



Human Need

WHEN JESUS lifted up his eyes and saw a great company of people who had come out to hear him, he asked Philip where they might get the bread to feed these people. After all, or, possibly, before all, a man must eat, but no one knew better than Jesus that man cannot live by bread alone. In his own case it had been human hunger which caused the first of his testings. He himself had emerged from a great spiritual experience only to find basic nature reasserting itself. In the course of thinking through his Messiahship he had been tempted with the notion of changing stones into bread and had rejected it because man does not live by bread alone. He always refused to use short cuts. In every instance he used matter as it was and filled it out into what it should be. This was

never done to impress people. Only a few chosen witnesses ever really saw him working out his processes, and, as usual, the wonder of it caused only a few to believe on him. Thus in this instance it is to ordinary human hunger that Christ ministers before he starts to impart any spiritual meaning to the act.

Five little peasant loaves of bread and two pickled fishes. The question might well be asked, "What are they among so many?" The answer is obvious: Five barley loaves and two small fishes are, in ordinary terms, so little as to be nothing, but this is the nothing out of which Christ builds. Given the smallest thing, and the power behind the universe using it, the result will always be a miracle.

Men often confuse themselves by balking at the miracle of the loaves and fishes when they can with great ease believe that Jesus reformed a thief during the short time both of them were hanging on adjoining crosses. This is to underestimate bread and overestimate thieves, and in both instances to misunderstand just who Jesus really is.

Objections offered along the way are so com-

pletely characteristic of good people: the vestryman's usual objection, "If we spend a great big sum of money for bread, we still couldn't manage to feed them." The faintly hopeful suggestion from another, that a small amount of food was available, is immediately countered by the pessimistic observation that it was so small as to be meaningless.

Most of us, who have come to know something of the character of Jesus, miss sorely one sentence describing a scene which the Gospeler took for granted—an account of the lad offering Jesus the loaves and fishes. What gesture did the boy make to bring them to Andrew's notice? What did the boy do to make it clear that he wanted to help? Jesus was not the kind to take anything from a child unless the child wanted to give. This tiny gift is all God ever needs. Remember, it was not tiny to the boy; it was for him an adequate lunch. The responsiveness of the very young to "agape" makes him give all that he has. Jesus' concern had so touched the boy, that the concern had become his own.

With the characteristic orderliness of his mind,

Jesus makes the men sit down. He then takes the bread, raises his eyes to the heavens, lifts his hand in the customary Hebrew gesture, and blesses God, his Father, for the creation of bread. The simple phrase, "and when he had given thanks," would convey to any Hebrew all the proper associations, but it is necessary that we note particularly that the giving of thanks means the blessing of the Father for any created thing. Add to this understanding the fact that, for the Christian, Jesus was the incarnation of the Word through whom all things were made, and we start to understand this scripture in its fullness.

There is one sentence that has deep spiritual significance, and that is the one which reads: "Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost." The serene effortlessness of the one who always "knew what he would do" has now passed, and it is the terrible concern of the Creator for all created things which shows itself. All things matter, of course, but it is the little, the broken, the helpless things which have a particular call on God's love. It is the broken things of creation through which God is particularly ap-

parent. In one glorious section of another Gospel we read of Jesus identifying himself with all the helpless people of the world. He says that those who have been kind to the hungry, the thirsty, strangers, the naked, the sick, and prisoners, will ultimately discover that they have been kind to him. This Gospel goes further, it demands kindness to all creation. We are beyond the concept of a Lord who can manifest himself only through regenerated human beings; we are now with a Lord who makes himself known in broken bread and poured-out wine.

Jesus' own food was to do the will of him that sent him and it is this flesh and blood he gives to all who would have it. It is the only food which endures unto everlasting life. Just as the woman at the well of Samaria had misunderstood, so these people who have been fed by him misunderstand. Jesus is talking about life, and all these people are worrying about existence. The proudest phrase in human history is also the most humble: "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all

which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." That which is really Jesus, the doing of the will of him that sent him, his own flesh and blood, is the very food of life eternal. To know that one has purpose and necessity in finishing "his work," is the food by which Christians live.

It is a strange attitude which compels us who own Jesus as Lord, for we, who are compelled to do something about the crushed and broken things of the world, are at the same time fully aware that it is through the crushed and broken things that God calls us. Human need has, because of Jesus, come to be known by us as the very need of God himself. Compassion drives us on to attempt to eliminate passion, but passion is the only medium which calls forth compassion. It is the endless paradox of the cross for those who bear its sign.

Many good people have, over the course of centuries, been bothered by the crudity of the language in St. John's Gospel. All this talk about giving a man's own body for food and the drinking of a man's blood seems needlessly crass, even if not cannibalistic. This shock is by no means

a new one; the Hebrews themselves were just as shocked by the statement. This delicacy would be a bit more consistent if people were to remember that the identification with the lamb of God carries more cruel associations. The lamb of God was a lamb raised for the very purpose of being slaughtered and this phrase carried its full shock to the Hebrew audiences. It is perfectly true to observe that the body was always associated with sacrifice and blood with life.

Sacrifice and life are noble words and they convey much to any imaginative person. The problem, however, is this: noble as the words are and noble as the concepts be, they still do not manage to impress on people that it is a particular body which is associated with the lamb of God and particular blood which is the life.

This Gospel, which is the loftiest and most cultivated in its concepts, is still the one most direct in its phraseology. The Word of God became flesh—the most objectionable description of humanity. The noble concepts of sacrifice and life often tend to become so spiritualized and abstract in reference that people can, with ease, forget

that it is the sacrifice of Jesus of Nazareth which is the important thing; that it is the pouring out of his lifeblood which is the source of our life.

Apart from the cross, all talk about sacrifice is misleading; apart from the cross, life is just some form of existence which does not count the cost of human need.



NOW A CERTAIN MAN *was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. (It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.)* Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick. When Jesus heard that, he said, *This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby. Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was. Then after that saith he to his disciples, Let us go into Judea again. His disciples say unto him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again? Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him. These things said he: and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus*

sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep. Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well. Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep. Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him. Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellow-disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him. Then when Jesus came, he found that he had lain in the grave four days already. Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off: And many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother. Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary sat still in the house. Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee. Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this? She

saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world. And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Master is come, and calleth for thee. As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly, and came unto him. Now Jesus was not yet come into the town, but was in that place where Martha met him. The Jews then which were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, She goeth unto the grave to weep there. Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, and said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept. Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him! And some of them said, Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died? Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto

him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days. Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God? Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me. And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes; and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go. Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him.

» VI «

Human Sorrow

HOW SHOULD we minister to human sorrow? This is a timeless problem and the account of the ministry to the sisters of Lazarus illustrates only too well many of the stock answers to this question.

There are professional mourners present who do nothing but make capital out of human sorrow, but professional mourners did not perish as a class with the coming of Christianity. In the fourth century, St. John Chrysostom inveighed against the burial habits of his people. He pointed out that the pagans, who regarded death as the end of all things, maintained more dignity in the face of it than Christians who had no reason to regard death as anything stranger than birth.

Obviously, there is no excuse for being trivial with bereaved people. An inanimate body, which

has served as the sacrament for the soul one has loved, commands a certain affection in its own right, and the loss of the dear senses of sight and touch creates a void which something else must fill. We must face the fact that genuine human sorrow is the deep and numbing pain of aloneness—which can find its relief only when Christ is seen; we can help only by exalting the valley of death to the level of a highway for our God. To augment another's sorrow by a great public display of grief is to indulge in some form of irreligion.

Think of the embarrassed little clichés people utter at funerals: "It's sad to meet on such an occasion"; "Well, he lived a good life and we'll all miss him"; "I have lost the best friend I ever had": these simply are not statements becoming in Christian people. Some people even pique their morbid interests by enjoying the sorrows of others.

In this country a whole folklore has grown up around funeral customs. As late as the nineteenth century bodies were buried without coffins. The price of the coffin has now come to be regarded as in direct proportion to the bereaved's regard for

the deceased. All this is a travesty of the Christian religion.

It is an equal travesty, however, to try to ignore death. Bodies perish and that is a fact which must be faced. Separation always means pain, but to mistake the process for the result on the one hand, or to deny the process on the other, is to indulge in sin. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the round world, and they that dwell therein"—even bodies just committed to it.

When Jesus goes to Bethlehem, he meets every sort of reaction: his disciples misunderstand his use of the word "sleep" and they say, "If he is only asleep, he is lucky"; Thomas' defeated utterance, "Let us go down and die with him"; Martha's gently accusing remark, "If you had been down here, it would not have happened, but you might be able to do something about it now," and then her resigned creedal statement, "Oh, of course, I know he will rise again on the last day."

Jesus' answer is the very core of the Christian religion: "I am the resurrection and the life. And for those who believe in me there is no death as you think death to be." Again, Martha answers

with an evasive creedal phrase, "I know that you are the Messiah," which is no answer at all to the question, "Do you believe this?"

Martha then goes back to get Mary. The paid mourners who are "comforting" her expect another thrill: she is going out to the grave to weep. Mary, ordinarily so sensitive and understanding, echoes her sister's accusations, "If you had been here, this would never have happened." When Jesus hears this and hears the mourners weeping, he groans in the spirit and is troubled. Altogether it was enough to make anybody groan.

"Jesus wept." Touching sermons have been preached on this text, holding up the example of the Lord's tenderness. They may be quite true, but within the context it is hard to see that the emotion involved is any other than that of complete frustration. H. V. Morton once described certain holy scenes as "obliterated forever beneath the suffocating trappings of piety." This would seem to be an adequate description of Jesus' frustration at this point: his dearest friends and his own people doing their best to ignore the light which was right in front of them. They had so thoroughly

permitted death to take over that they no longer recognized life eternal right in their midst. He was indeed tempted in all things like as we, but, as impenetrable a wall as human sorrow often is, it is still the stuff out of which God can produce marvels.

Jesus has the tomb uncovered, lifts his eyes, and after giving thanks, cries with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth." St. John's description of the voice of Jesus is engaging. In one instance, it seemed to the people standing around that thunder had answered his prayer. In another instance a band of soldiers fell back in terror when he spoke to them. Mary Magdalene knew the risen Lord by his pronunciation of her name. His own particular cry of "Peace" reassured the frightened disciples. It was the shepherd's voice which the sheep always know; the voice which even the dead could hear and live. It must have been capable of infinite modulation, and it certainly possessed the strange faculty of seeming to be addressed personally to each one who heard it. This time the voice transmutes human sorrow into divine opportunity.

Jesus' use of human sorrow follows his timeless

pattern. It is a fact, a sad fact, but God can use it. When he was dying on the cross he saw to it that his mother had another son to worry about and that his best friend had her to care for. Mary Magdalene knew sorrow at his cross. According to St. Luke, Jesus had driven seven dreadful spirits from her. She adored the Master with the complete outgoing generosity of those who have been made whole. In trying to do her last poor service to the body which had housed him, her reward was to meet the living Lord.

There is another person, however, who recovered from a worse blow than any of these: a man whose name was Simon. The New Testament is full of intimate little observations about people well known to the early Church. St. Mark, in giving his account of the procession to Golgotha, points out in passing that Simon of Cyrene, who was compelled to carry the cross for Jesus, was the father of Alexander and Rufus. This assumes that all early Churchmen knew Alexander and Rufus. The references to the Simon of whom I speak are just as natural. He was part of the Church; he is known to everyone. Just how much

the risen Lord meant to this Simon we do not know; it must have been a lot to make him, or keep him, a Christian. He was the father of Judas Iscariot.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.



JESUS WENT UNTO *the mount of Olives*. And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them. And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou? This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not. So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground. And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her,

Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.

Simon Peter said unto him, Lord, whither goest thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards. Peter said unto him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake. Jesus answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice.

And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple: that disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest. But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other disciple, which was known unto the high priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter. Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, Art not thou also one of this man's disciples? He saith, I am not. And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals; for it was cold: and they warmed themselves: and Peter

stood with them, and warmed himself. . . . They said therefore unto him, Art not thou also one of his disciples? He denied it, and said, I am not. One of the servants of the high priest, being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him? Peter then denied again: and immediately the cock crew.

So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him Feed my sheep.

I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me. Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass,

ye may believe that I am he. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me. When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. Then the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom he spake. Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved. Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of whom he spake. He then lying on Jesus' breast saith unto him, Lord, who is it? Jesus answered, He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly. Now no man at the table knew for what intent he spake this unto him. For some of them thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, Buy those things that we have need of against the feast; or, that he should give something to the poor. He then, having received the sop, went immediately out; and it was night.

» VII «

Human Weakness

ADULTERY IS serious, wicked business. Jesus had for it a horror which canon law has often tended to soften. In St. Matthew's masterly editing which we call the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus made it clear that, in the eyes of God, to look on a woman with lust was as serious as the world considered actual adultery. God's opinion of adultery is so terrible that it cannot even be described. Marriage is a spiritual as well as physical affair and is life-long in its duration. For Christians, adultery is akin to sacrilege for it is interference with the unity of the family, a unity modeled after the nature of God himself.

It is to a man as uncompromisingly stern in moral matters as Jesus, that the scribes and Pharisees bring a woman taken in the very act of adul-

tery. This incident is probably Holy Scripture's most sensitive description of hating the sin and loving the sinner.

It should be pointed out that the scribes and Pharisees were not particularly outraged by the sin. Indeed, the legal penalties had for a long time rarely been applied. They brought the woman there for the sole purpose of trapping Jesus. They knew his nature so well, as able enemies generally do, that they knew he would never agree to the carrying out of the harsh Mosaic ruling on the matter. At the same time, even though they might have had no intention of putting her to death, if they could get him to deny the Mosaic Law, they would have placed him in a hopeless position and, if the stoning could have happened as a spontaneous civic disturbance, that would have meant that he was responsible for inciting people to riot. This would have placed him in a dangerous position with the Roman authorities.

The description of the whole scene is vivid. One can hear the scribes and Pharisees mouthing the phrase, "In the very act." Jesus stoops down, and with his finger, writes on the ground—how one

would love to know what he wrote. But they continue asking him and he lifts himself up and says, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." It has always been agreed that being "without sin" in this phrase refers to being "without sin in this particular matter." And again he writes on the ground.

St. John's description of their leaving is most penetrating. All of them are convicted by their own consciences, but it is the older men who see the point before the younger men. This is an extraordinary insight into the harsh judgment of the young.

When Jesus is finally left alone with the woman, she stands without an accuser, without anyone there to condemn her. Jesus, of course, never condemns and so the woman is told to go and sin no more.

The Greek word which is translated as "condemn" means to "judge down," and that is the clue to Jesus' attitude toward the condemnation of sinners. He was totally factual about sin. Sin is doing something that is wrong and doing it intentionally. Jesus never says, "Go, you really

didn't sin at all"; "Go, sin is only ignorance and you cannot help that"; "Go, you are just being human." His invariable warning is, "Go, and sin no more."

In people made in the image of God, whatever sin is, it certainly cannot be natural. This point must be made clear, for one is likely to misunderstand the compassion of Christ. He knew all men and he knew human weakness, but it is his love, his "agape," which makes him want to rebuild and to help. Human weakness is a sad fact. Human sin is horrible. But he can conquer both. He can always take things just as they are and turn them into things as they ought to be. The forgiveness of God is unlike almost anything we know. It is the sort of thing which blots out our transgressions, makes new creatures of us, gives us rebirth by his spirit.

Anciently, the Church had one extremely useful therapeutic device. When a man was exorcised and anointed as a Christian, he was given a new name. How often in our own experience we have managed to ignore startling changes of character and direction because we could dismiss the changed person under the familiarity of the old name and old associations.

Religious art has done much to give people the notion that penitence ought, somehow, to be a lingering affair. This is scarcely appropriate, if sins are truly forgiven. For a Christian to go on glooming over sins forgiven is to give a public witness of despair rather than of faith. St. Paul's attitude is a splendid illustration of the right Christian response to sins forgiven. He is the first to admit that he persecuted the Church of God and that he has no right to be called an apostle, but God made him one and one, in some ways, more useful than any of the rest of them.

For another kind of human weakness Jesus produces another form of treatment. Simon Peter was by nature overconfident, mercurial, often perverse and highly emotional. In a moment of enthusiasm, he asserts that he will lay down his life for Jesus, but when the moment of testing comes, he fails his Lord and himself.

Simon Peter has always been popular because his weaknesses are the ones people know best. How few people ever manage to stand steadfastly by their friends when those friends are being criticized—and are absent? Peter with a sword

was brave enough to cut off a servant's ear, but Peter without a sword denied that he was a disciple and denied even being with the Lord in the Garden. Jesus' warning phrases to him had been gently ironic: "The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice." In the Near East one hears cocks crowing almost continuously.

Peter's forgiveness and healing is a lovely scene. Incidentally, it is interesting to note that whenever Simon Peter is being perverse or difficult, St. John calls him Peter and whenever he is being himself at his best, the Lord calls him Simon. The personal heartbreak of such a man as St. Peter must have been acute. He had been so sure he would do the right thing and he had gone and done the wrong thing, not once, but three times, so Jesus gives him a threefold cure. It is the cure for all people of that temperament—to start worrying about the temperament and needs of others. "Feed my lambs, feed my sheep, feed my sheep." Shepherds have to be notably imperturbable.

St. John's treatment of Judas is coldly factual. Judas encouraged in himself all the wrong reactions, and therefore he was always open to the

wrong influences. As we have noticed before, Judas was the son of a man well known in the early Church, one Simon by name, in terms of context in another place, possibly Simon the Canaanite, one of the Twelve. Iscariot is possibly a reference to the bag in which money was carried, which would have been in the form of a leathern apron. There has long been considerable doubt that Iscariot meant a man of Kerioth, which relies on a reference so antique as to be meaningless in New Testament times.

It is difficult to know at what point in his life Judas' first flush of enthusiasm had given way to misunderstanding or disillusionment, remembering that misunderstanding and disillusionment of themselves partake of the nature of sin. It is clear that Jesus always knew him to be weak and open to any wicked influence, but even to the end it troubled Jesus in spirit.

The relentless force of a Greek tragedy enters into the scene. Judas has committed himself to darkness, and even at the intimate and affectionate supper of Master and disciples Satan entered into him. "And after the sop Satan entered into him"

is a phrase which has caused many a saint to tremble after making his communion. There is a hymn in the orthodox liturgy which has touching import.

Of thy Mystical Supper, O Son of God, accept me today as a communicant; for I will not speak of thy Mystery to thine enemy, neither like Judas will I give thee a kiss; but like the thief will I confess thee: Remember me, O Lord, in thy kingdom.

It has often been argued by good and sensitive people that there was a certain callousness shown by Jesus when he chose Judas as a disciple. If he thought Judas would betray him, why did he choose him and damn him with an infamy unrivaled? Such a question could only come from good and gentle people, people who have never seen much of the darkness in the world. The problem is really not with Jesus, but with Judas; he made the decision. When he was chosen he had human weaknesses; so did St. Peter; so did St. Thomas, but at some point he decided for darkness

as over against light. In the divine drama there were plenty of other ways Jesus could have been taken. He himself pointed out that it was easy enough. Treachery was unavoidable, but Judas need not have been the one to betray him. "Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!" This is Christianity at its most factual.

The endless theological speculation about Judas' final status with God is not our problem. We know the fate of the one who denied him. We know what happened to those who forsook him and fled, but what happened to the one who betrayed him is beyond our knowledge. There is only one fact worth remembering, and that is whenever and wherever Judas had to face his Lord, it was the same Lord who refused to condemn an adulterous woman and who remade Peter. The reaction that this meeting could produce would make any medieval description of hell rather inadequate.

Unfortunately, in this world, people are not so constructed that there is one major sin per person.

All of us are mixtures, combinations of numbers of human weaknesses. Drunkenness may be a problem for one man, but we now know that drunkenness is only the outward expression of a number of other weaknesses. Bad temper may in some way be the symptom of a sensitiveness which has been outraged or frustrated. But there is always one who can turn these weaknesses into strength. St. Paul learned this thoroughly. All the many gifts he once regarded as his strong points, he learned to discount for the weakness whereby God had made him truly strong. It is curious, paradoxical, the way he can even boast of his infirmities because it is through them that God has shown the sufficiency of divine strength.

Our fathers were fond of saying that one man and God are a working majority, but so often they meant by "one man" a faultless, righteous, noble soul. This gospel is not concerned with faultless, righteous, noble souls because, apart from Jesus, the gospeler has never met any. He is concerned with people like us, just ordinary stuff, human and weak, who are capable, with God's help, of turning a world upside down. We are the stuff out of which God can make saints.



THEN CAME THE OFFICERS *to the chief priests and Pharisees; and they said unto them, Why have ye not brought him? The officers answered, Never man spake like this man. Then answered them the Pharisees, Are ye also deceived? Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him? But this people who knoweth not the law are cursed. Nicodemus saith unto them, (he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them,) Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth? They answered and said unto him, Art thou also of Galilee? Search, and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet. And every man went unto his own house.*

Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

»» VIII ««

Human Judgments

THE CRITERIA by which men judge things have always been strange. Dislike of others can be caused by foreignness, overfamiliarity, race, religion, or any one of an enormous number of things. The almost invariable difficulty with the judgments men make is that they are not really judgments at all; they are prejudgments. Prejudice, of course, means just that. It can mean that I will refuse to learn truths from another man because I have already determined that the other man could not possibly say anything of importance to me. A man may have brown skin, therefore, obviously, he has nothing to tell any man who has yellow skin. What can a German tell an Anglo-Saxon? These statements all seem so trivial and ridiculous; the difficulty is, trivial and ridiculous

as they may seem, they represent fairly the pre-judgments most of us make.

Jesus was a disturbing person. He disturbed everybody, his family, his friends, and the best people of his nation, as well as the worst. He kept confronting people with the answers to questions they did not want to ask: Does God accept the good and kindly devotions of schismatics, Samaritans for example? Will God forgive any kind of sin, even adultery? Did God create a good world and endow it with good processes, including marriage, and every responsibility that goes with marriage? Does the Spirit of God move freely like the wind, or is it to be confined in the sacred tomb of official utterance?

It is easy for us to see that these questions would embarrass the Hebrew nation, but we must not forget that, within our own context and setting, they are equally embarrassing to us. Must we say that God accepts the good and kindly devotions of schismatics and heretics? We all know only too well how often we begrudge the manifest goodness of those with whose official theories we disagree. Often, we find ourselves questioning their motives

so thoroughly that we end up by denying the very goodness itself. The men of our Lord's own Church were neither the first or the last to argue that if a blind man had received his sight other than through official channels, it must have been the action of a devil. Such thinking is not an exclusively ecclesiastical honor. Official medicine has behaved just as badly in our own time. The aggravating answer is always there: "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see." One can scarcely argue methodology with a victim of poliomyelitis who has been made whole through the ministrations of Sister Kenny.

Jesus had disturbed the moral leaders of his nation. I think it was Dorothy Sayers who pointed out that it was not a case of ignorance on the part of the chief priests and Pharisees. They knew well enough what was going on and they just were not having any. The common people always heard Jesus gladly. Common people still do. The most disillusioning thing for a young clergyman is to learn that, in the eyes of the world, he and the clergy of a half a dozen totally different communions are exactly alike. The violence of theo-

logical dispute is not without reason, but much of it is lost on the ordinary man who finds it all quite meaningless, unless the point involved is worth dying for.

The common people heard Jesus gladly because they did not know enough about the scriptures to know that a prophet could not possibly come out of Galilee. Mind you, the scripture did not say that there should never arise a prophet from Galilee. It just never said positively that there would be one. The attitude of the chief priests and Pharisees has proved to be the standard one toward anyone who presumes to propagate new knowledge. Galileo knew the problem, and, in a lesser way, so did Robert Fulton. The Victorian clergy who objected to the steam engine because it was not prophesied in Holy Scripture were certainly loyal to the high priests' tradition.

The very police who had been sent out to arrest Jesus were so impressed that they had not arrested him. It is always an interesting point of conscience whether police exist to enforce the laws or to obey the orders of others. Apparently, the action ordered by their superiors was illegal, for the only

reply made to Nicodemus' objection is the time-honored one, condemnation by association. Since Nicodemus protests that the law does not judge any man before it hears him and knows what the charges are against him, they charge him with being a secret sympathizer.

It is difficult to think about this process without becoming too timely and contemporaneous in one's observations. The great jurists all agree that specifically personalized legislation is always bad legislation. If it takes a private bill to get a specific man into the country, then patently there is something wrong with the immigration law. Some jurists have argued that the Nuremberg trials were questionable because the prisoners were being tried for crimes committed before some of the specific laws were operative. This is a problem for jurists, of course. The problem for us is the frame of mind of the chief priests and Pharisees who were inventing reasons, since the law gave them none, for eliminating Jesus of Nazareth. Even one of their own number is subject to character assassination. They were going to get rid of Jesus and not even the law of God was going to stand in their

way. Even if the scripture had said that a prophet would arise out of Galilee, they would have found some way of avoiding facing the fact as Jesus presented that fact; even to the point of saying that the scripture never mentioned that his name should be Jesus.

After this sorry scene, every man went unto his own house. In this gospel there are no useless phrases. The mention of each man going to his own house is an ironic restatement of the point of view these men had expressed. Each man in his own house is even more impervious to the facts and scenes which are all around him. In modern terms, the phrase is best conveyed by something like this: And each man went back to his own ivory tower.

Within the very governing body, however, there were many who believed on Jesus, but they did not dare say so—they would have been put out of the synagogue. They would have lost their standing in the community and their power. It is a strange definition of power, however, which gives a man only the right to agree. It is much like a free election with only one party putting up candidates.

St. John says that they might not confess him because they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God. It is interesting to note that, in all history, those who love the praise of men are invariably the ones who get the blame of men in later ages. The praise of men is the invariable reward for strict conformity. All of us like to be liked, and, therefore, all of us have an innate tendency to do the things which people like, and hold the ideas people think we should hold.

The laity have a time-honored method for taming an overenthusiastic young clergyman. When he preaches directly and fearlessly to their needs and his own, the response is very cool. When he says the things they want to hear, they will go out of their way to thank him for the message and make their affection for him quite clear. In most instances, this system works. If the young parson is faithful about his prayers and carries the concern of a whole parish constantly in his heart, then it is suggested, most kindly of course, that he ought to get out more and mix with his people. How often have young men followed this advice, only to discover that in time of trouble their parishioners

turned elsewhere for spiritual help. Somewhere along the line, in the desire to be real men, they had ceased being clergymen in the eyes of their people, and remember, these are the very people who, by praise, kindness and flattery, had driven their clergy into this situation.

It would have taken courage to confess Jesus in the midst of the synagogue. It now takes no courage to confess him publicly. It only becomes dangerous when we start doing it privately. If I am to confess Jesus, I may well be exposed to conversations in which I cannot only have no part, but of which I must disapprove so thoroughly as to get up and leave. If I am to confess Jesus, there are, on occasion, shows I simply cannot sit through. There are popular books which I shall have to regard as not only a waste of time, but as a waste of moral substance. Banning books does little good, but refusing to buy an unworthy one produces the only censorship worth talking about, the personal moral censorship any loyalty to Jesus must impose. If I am to confess Jesus, I certainly must do my best to rely on his help to be as imperturbable as he in dealing with any sinner,

including myself, but this does not by any means imply that I must lose or suppress my sense of outrage and shock at sin itself. The right question nowadays is not, How can I best make a great public confession of my faith? Rather it is, How can I so order my private life that all the people with whom I deal shall know what my religion is?

The world on the outside is very rarely impressed with any great communion's official utterances on the problems of the day. The world only starts to be impressed when one hears observations such as these: Yes, he has a good sense of humor, but you have to watch your stories because there are some things he does not like. There is no good in trying to get hold of him today, he is off on a retreat or something. She is really a lot of fun to have around, but you have to look out for one thing: if you start gossiping, she is likely to get up and leave. She is touchy about some things: I don't think she has any Jewish blood, and yet the other day I made some crack about the Jews and she lit into me. Have you ever noticed him at lunch: he always seems to get quiet a moment before eating; do you suppose he is saying grace

or something? If I decide for the praise of men, few remarks such as these are likely to be heard. Men praise those who do not annoy them and do not pose any problems, but the hand of God in history is such that the only men we remember with gratitude are those who loved the praise of God; and, much as they loved mankind, really did not give a rap for human judgments.

But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing against myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord. Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.



NOW BEFORE the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him; Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter. Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus saith to

him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all. For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean. So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him.

Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you. A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

» IX «

Human Service

THE OLD NAME for footwashing is Maundy, probably derived from the Latin word meaning "we are commanded." The original Maundy, however, has been so effective in the course of Christian history that it is now almost impossible to find a form of service which is commonly regarded as sufficiently menial to carry out the rigid injunction. On Maundy Thursday it is most appropriate to carry out some form of the thing, but what shall we do? There is no menial service left in our world. If a Bishop on Maundy Thursday were to shine the shoes of the congregation it might be good for the Bishop, and it certainly would impress the congregation deeply, but it would also deprive a number of people of a portion of their day's income, people whose business it is to shine shoes.

Certainly there is no one left who regards shoe shining as a menial service to be performed by slaves or other lesser people. The various hotels and public institutions are now equipped with people who draw water and give out hand towels, but neither the people who do it nor the rest of us regard it as menial service. Footwashing is so archaic in a well-shod country that it has no meaning in modern context. This is one portion of the Gospel that has made an enormous impact on our civilization.

The liturgical problem thus raised is a fascinating one for liturgiologists, but it has small meaning to the rest of us. The meaning of the Gospel is so clear that it cannot be missed. Liturgics notwithstanding, the answer is human service, rendered with that perfect sense of ultimate values which we call humility. Jesus knows that his time in this world is drawing rapidly to its end and, knowing where he was from and where he was going, he rises during the meal, strips himself, and puts on him the servant's towel. Garbed thus, he proceeds to perform the most menial act of an Oriental servant. When he starts to wash Simon

Peter's feet, Peter is duly shocked and protests. Jesus points out that the full meaning of it is not yet clear. Peter will not understand until much later. Jesus says, "If I don't wash, you have no part with me."

It has been pointed out by certain wise men that it is not only more blessed to give than to receive, but it is also much easier. Much so-called charity is performed because it makes the giver feel so much better. It can make the giver feel superior and virtuous at the same time. This is one of the most deceptive snares of the devil since it works on the theory that what we have is our own, rather than something entrusted to our stewardship by the goodness of God.

One recognizes all the economic problems involved, but there is still something dangerous about the government's rewriting Holy Scripture so that it would read, "Take heed that ye do not your alms before men (except the Bureau of Internal Revenue), to be seen of them (except on Form 1040, Describe Deductions and state to whom paid)." Taxes are the price of freedom and corporate responsibility. To give to a worthy cause

in order to avoid paying taxes is, at best, a questionable form of extortion on the part of the government and little conducive to personal generosity on the part of the taxpayer. Unless one bears in mind that a contribution to a great hospital, for example, is basically a contribution to individuals who need help, the end result is likely to be of little spiritual value either to the giver or the recipient. We share with others what is temporarily ours, because it is on loan to us for that purpose. It is only Christian realism at its best which produces the statement, "When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do."

We have all received, otherwise we would not be alive. The problem is to learn how to receive gracefully, by which I mean, full of grace. God pours out his gifts on us, but we are fairly successful in avoiding a great number of them. He gives us endless opportunities for service, endless examples of love and devotion. He even grants us forgiveness, which means he lets us off from, or sends away, our debts to him. It takes real belief and lots of humility to accept this particular gift

of forgiveness from God. We are often secretly so proud of our sins that we resist having them dismissed. It is, in the long run, nothing but conceit to glory in the extent of one's wickedness. Most of us are not that distinguished. Our deeds are petty deeds, children's deeds. To accept forgiveness from God is difficult, because it means, ultimately, that we have to admit, in such and such a matter, we were absolute failures and start again from scratch, God-forgiven, and self-forgiven. The Lord's Prayer is a two-edged thing. We never know what it means to forgive others until we receive God's forgiveness for ourselves.

Peter's usual enthusiasm leads him to want to be washed all over, but Jesus tells him gently that he is completely clean. The thing that mattered was the washing. After this, he puts on his clothes again, and sits down and starts to explain just what has happened. They call him Lord and Master quite rightly, but if their Lord and Master could manage to perform this act of menial service to them, they certainly should be able to manage to do as much for one another. He has set the example and they and we must follow.

It is important to remember that, if we own

Jesus as Lord, then we are admitting first and foremost that he is greater than we are. If we claim to be his servants, it is obvious that he, as Master of us all, is superior to us in every way. Remembering this, we can then approach human service in his terms. This is the meaning of the saying, "But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant." It is too bad that the glorious title of servant has come to be regarded as something unworthy of common use apart from the great officers of state who are designated public servants. One almost never hears the word nowadays. Social Service, as a description of social work, has achieved such a mixed connotation that one can only say it if wearing a smile of transparent good will. It is now impossible to refer to people who come in "to help out" as domestic servants. Part of this, admittedly, is due to the fact that the original Maundy was so successful that there is rightly no longer any association of menial service with any form of human labor. This is not, however, the reason that the word "servant" has fallen into such bad repute. This honorable title has disintegrated because the lot of us who are called by our one

and only Master to be servants have acted rather as lords over God's heritage, not ours. We are called to be the servants of all mankind.

If we illustrate this point within the official ministry of the Church, it will be only too clear. Tremendous palaces, an innumerable entourage, and a fabulous income have rarely helped either the clergy or their people to remember that the word "minister" as used in the New Testament is a word which means either "laborer" or "under-rower."

It is always easy, however, to pick on the clergy. There are examples elsewhere. The noble duke, who, at the communion rail, told his groom that there all men were equal, was not doing much for either the groom or himself when the two of them got outside the church. It is just as easy, however, to pick on the ancient aristocracy. Aristocracy originally meant the government of the state by its best citizens—those who had the ability and the public spirit to become servants of their fellows. The police of some cities and towns have not always treated the citizenry as though policemen, too, were called to be public servants.

Superior education has not always endeared itself to the public by the attitude of the highly educated. The dean of a great college was wont to remind his students that the privilege of higher education carried grave responsibilities. He used to liken it to four men holding a valuable piano case. One of the four gets the notion that if he is freed of his share of the load he can find a way of easing the load for them all. The others agree, and take on the additional weight. If the man thus freed returns immediately with sufficiently strong bracing for the case, then the other men are freed of the weight and the only problem left is to keep the thing balanced. If, however, the man thus freed first lights a cigarette, then starts cracking jokes and gives the other men a few playful digs in the ribs, the end result will be that both the play-boy and his idea will become objects of anger, if not hatred.

The illustrations of the wrong attitude about human service are numerable. The point of it all is that Christians, people called to be servants, have behaved as though they were lords and masters of men.

Jesus then comes to the only commandment he ever gave. We are to love one another as he has loved us. This is the most shattering idea in the whole New Testament. It is the answer to the question Peter asked in another gospel, "How often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him?" We forgive to the point of lying for our brethren. How much can love require of us? Everything up to and including the cross.

Christianity, if it is to take this commandment seriously, must be the loving community. The Quakers have an awful habit of putting their fingers on any spiritual sore spot. Some of us can speak with deep pride about the splendor of our particular ecclesiastical traditions, the magnificence of our services, and the purity of our understanding of Word and Sacrament, and then a Quaker will say, But do you all love one another?

"Service" and "love" sound awfully sentimental in a world as harsh as ours. There are black spots of wickedness, seemingly impervious to any light or any love. Men are still going to prison after mock trials. Men are still being tortured and

brainwashed and abused. Human degradation goes on as an active process.

One can appreciate only too well the tragic, angry cry of the Psalmist:

O Lord God, to whom vengeance belongeth, show thyself. How long shall the ungodly triumph? They smite down thy people, O Lord; they murder the widow and the stranger, and put the fatherless to death. Thou God, to whom vengeance belongeth, show thyself.

He did show himself—a lonely figure hanging on a cross. This is the vengeance of God.

*Yet angel hosts adore thee
And tremble as they gaze.*



THEN GATHERED the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, *What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him; and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation. And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. . . . Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death.*

Pilate then went out unto them, and said, What accusation bring ye against this man? They answered and said unto him, If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee. Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye him, and judge him according to your law. The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death: That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying

what death he should die. Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews? Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me? . . . Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Everyone that is of the truth heareth my voice. Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all. But ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the pass-over: will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews? Then cried they all again, saying Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber.

Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him. And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and they put on him a purple robe, and said, Hail, King of the Jews! and they smote him with their hands. Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him. Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And

Pilate saith unto them, Behold the man! When the chief priests therefore and officers saw him, they cried out, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Take ye him, and crucify him: for I find no fault in him. The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God. When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he was the more afraid; And went again into the judgment hall, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art thou? But Jesus gave him no answer. Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee? Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin. And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release him: but the Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar.



Human Associations

THE TWO OFFICIAL bodies with which Jesus had dealings were the Church and the state. The Church meant Israel, ecclesiastically considered, and the state meant the self-consciously great and expanding Roman Empire. Both institutions were divine in origin since both were expansions of the family and the family is the very nature of God himself.

To say, as some have, that the Church was founded on Pentecost is to miss the whole point of human associations within the family. Israel was the Church and to that Church its Lord and Master came. One misses completely all of the New Testament references to the "true Israel" if one does not recognize that Jesus regarded Israel itself

as *the* congregation of God's people—their coming together in terms of religion.

During the first third of the first century A.D. the ancient Church was operating in its customary way, busy about good works, cautious about public opinion, sensitive about relationships with the state and much more concerned with the authenticity of the media than with either the genuineness of the source or the manifest blessing of the result.

Casuistry abounded and flourished like the green bay tree—it always has, and unfortunately still does. Possibly, the term casuistry needs some explanation. Casuistry is, in brief, the resolution of doubtful cases of conscience or questions of right and wrong; for example, if a woman dashes into your house and says, “My husband is going to kill me,” and a few minutes later the husband appears at the door with an ax in his hand and asks if his wife is there, does loyalty to the truth require you to say, “Yes, she is” or “No, she isn’t”? A brilliant casuist will come up with the ablest answer ever devised and that is the definition of a lie, which runs, “A lie is the malicious withholding of the truth from a person who has the right to

know." At the same time, we must admit that a definition as clever and completely adequate as this is still utterly confusing to the layman.

The simple conventions of our life have set up certain commonly accepted misstatements which are taken with liturgical significance. If, for example, one is not "at home," it has come to mean only that the person involved is not receiving visitors that day. But there is still something to be said for Scottish directness: "Aye, she is at home, but she does no' want to see you." In the long run, it is so easy to become shrewd in moral decisions, that one ultimately ceases to be even moral.

The ultimate absurdity of casuistry-run-wild is shown in the high priest's statement, "It is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not." This decision only achieves its full force when we remember its prelude, "If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him; and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation."

The first thing to note is that the chief priests and Pharisees identify the nation's welfare with their own. If they suffered, obviously the nation

would be ruined. The Pharisees were not the last human beings to feel this way. As over against this encrusted self-interest, individuals, as such, are always expendable—human beings are dispensable. Obviously, it is better to have one man put out of the way than have a whole nation suffer. The dispensable man in this instance happened to be God incarnate. The curious result of it all is that, for the convinced Christian, there is no such thing as a dispensable man. If there is one person in the remotest corner of the world who is suffering under maltreatment or injustice, it is my concern. He is not dispensable, he is one of the defenseless and the helpless with whom my Lord identified himself.

Too often we forget that the touchingly beautiful words of the self-discovery of the elect are followed by these words:

I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or

a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not unto me.

The conclusion of the Gospel passage is that these shall go into dread punishment. For Christians, there are no dispensable people.

The word "expedient" is always a difficult one. In Greek it means "bearing together," and invariably has the association with it of putting up with something which is not totally happy or satisfying. Expediency, in Christian terms, now carries with it the inevitable association of advantageousness.

The test of expediency, as of all human judgments, is, Are you setting out to get the praise of men or the praise of God? St. Joan of Arc, Fénelon and Wesley were nuisances to their ecclesiastical superiors. Michael Servetus was, for a number of different reasons, equally embarrassing to his religious contemporaries. The solution in each case is only too well known. Possibly the best observation ever made was Castellio's to Calvin,

“To burn a man is not to prove a doctrine, it is to burn a man.” Advantageousness in a decision is generally so timely as to remove any possibility of its ever being timeless. St. John appreciates the irony of the decision. Jesus did die for all the people, but a generation later, the Romans came and took away their place and nation.

There are only three major New Testament attitudes toward the state which matter. One is St. Paul’s, which works on the theory that the powers that be are ordained of God and the only problem with an unfriendly state is to live as a good citizen, because the world is going to end so soon that it is not worth while upsetting things. (St. Peter’s is a little stronger, but is still basically the same.) St. Paul was a Roman citizen and very proud of it, but he offers no theory of state other than that of its guardianship of law. It is high time to awake out of sleep, “for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed, the night is far spent, the day is at hand.”

The second theory is that of the author of the Revelation. From his point of view, the state is so bad that nothing but God’s utter destruction of it

can help matters. The state persecuted the saints, therefore God will intervene and destroy this wicked power.

The third is the attitude of Jesus toward the state. The famous saying in another gospel about giving to God and Caesar the tributes due to each, is of course not a theory at all, but a most adroit way of avoiding a direct answer to people who were trying to trap him. His reference in the little Apocalypse (in St. Matthew) to "the abomination of desolation" is a factual reference to the Roman invasion of the temple; it is not a judgment. The only positive theory he ever advances is found within the context of his trial before Pilate.

The scene is one which may well make any state and any citizen pause. When Pilate asks what the accusation is, the answer is, "If he weren't guilty, we wouldn't have brought him before you." Then both sides try to shift the responsibility. Pilate says, "Well, you take him and judge him." His enemies say, "We, of course, can't put him to death under *your* laws." Naturally, these people who have brought to trial an innocent man could not go into the judgment hall because association

with a Gentile in a Gentile's house would have so defiled them that they could not eat the Passover. That was why Pilate had to go out to them. This admirable moral scruple, however, did not keep them from subjecting an innocent man to gentile judgment in order that he might be put to death.

Pilate re-enters the hall and has Jesus brought to him and asks him, with some cynical amusement, "Are you the king of the Jews?" Jesus answers in an equally cold tone, "Is this your own idea, or did somebody else tell you?" Pilate's answer has echoed on the lips of proconsuls, viceroys and police chiefs ever since: "I am not Jewish; I know nothing about it. Your own nation and your own clergy have handed you over to me. What have you done?" Jesus' explanation is that his kingdom is not of this world, a statement which the Church seems to have forgotten now and then. Pilate now asks more seriously, "Are you really a king?" and Jesus says, "Of course I am; I was born one and I came into the world to bear witness to the truth. Everyone that is of the truth hears my voice." Pilate responds with the cynical question, "What is truth?" Bacon, in one of his greatest essays,

points out that, having asked the question, Pilate then turns his back on the answer and goes out to truth's accusers. Pilate says, "I can't find anything wrong with him. I customarily release some prisoner at each Passover, what would you say if I release the 'King of the Jews'?" The crowd prefers a notable robber.

One penetrating Jewish writer has pointed out that the crowd outside could easily have been stirred to cry Barabbas, since that name meant "son of the father," so that both Jesus' friends and his enemies could have ended up by shouting the same thing.

Then Pilate, therefore, took Jesus and scourged him. The crown of thorns is put on and the purple robe. He is abused by the soldiers as they cry, "Hail, King of the Jews." This performance was sort of double fun; it was a chance to get back at a Jew, and by their own asking, make fun of all Jews at the same time. Pilate now goes out again and says, "I bring him forth to you that ye may know that I find no fault in him." (If he found no fault in him why did he have him scourged?) Jesus stands there, wearing the crown of thorns

and the purple robe and Pilate says, "Behold the man!" This is irony at its greatest. Pilate was making fun of a pitiable object and yet his statement was true: this is *the* man—what God had in mind when he created man. The only response to the tragic scene is the shout, "Crucify, crucify." Pilate says, "You crucify him." The people answer, "We have a law, and by our law, he ought to die, because he made himself the son of God." Just how a Messiah could ever be born according to prophecy if it was illegal for a Messiah to be a Messiah is an interesting question, but the answer disturbs Pilate.

Rome was extremely sensitive about foreign gods and took great pains to keep the local gods happy. Part of Pilate's job was to see to it that the God of the Jews was kept sufficiently appeased not to interfere with the Roman government. Pilate is now afraid. He is not afraid of doing an immoral thing; he is afraid of doing an act which would be politically unwise.

Back into the hall he goes with Jesus and asks, "Where do you really come from?" Jesus does not bother to answer, but Pilate is now disturbed. If

this is the son of some god or other, it might turn out very badly. Pilate says, "Aren't you going to talk to me? Don't you know that I have the power to crucify you and the power to let you go?" Jesus answers, "You could have no power against me except it were given you from Heaven. Therefore, he that delivered me to you has committed the greater sin." Power "from above" means power "from Heaven." The community of families we call a nation is a real thing with integrity of its own and responsibility of its own. Israel was a nation as well as being a church.

This point can stand some examination. It has for some time been assumed that there were short cuts to international peace, that somehow one could be a citizen of the world without being a citizen of any particular nation. It is, of course, analogous to the notion that a man can be a family man without having any family.

The popular truism, "charity begins at home," is not the utterance of a cynic, but of a Christian. It is no problem whatever to love people you do not know—people who have never managed either religiously or politically to irritate you. The prob-

lem is to love the people you do know and, more particularly, the ones who manage to irritate you most of the time, either religiously, or politically, or both. Loyalty has to start somewhere and it has to start concretely. I cannot love human beings in general until I love individuals in particular. I cannot be loyal to any larger group unless I am first of all loyal to the smaller one with which, by birth or conviction, I am most closely associated. It is the first temptation of the devil to by-pass the immediate duty which may be painful, in favor of a broader duty which, it is assumed, will not have the same painful associations. All of this is madness.

I am only going to start loving the community of nations when I have arrived at the point that I cannot tolerate the thought of my own particular nation's being unjust or immoral. The problem is one of integrity. A lasting and worthy community of nations cannot be built up out of bad citizens who refuse to face their immediate responsibility.

Many of us know only too well the hideous results of chauvinism. We have seen great people ruin themselves and make an entire world suffer for their exaggerated notions of their own manifest

destiny. But whether it be Hitler, or Mussolini, or Stalin, even remembering the harm wrought by each one, we must not permit ourselves to fall into the snare of believing that a nation, our nation, or any nation, has no distinct contribution to make to the richness of the world.

The tragic utterance of Jesus over the inevitable fate of Jerusalem is the statement of one of Israel's loyal and loving sons. It is the heartbreaking utterance of a loyal Jew's concern for the city of the great king. He wept over Jerusalem. Many have wept since. Israel was a nation as well as a Church, and none loved Israel more than Jesus.

John the Baptist's argument with his own people had been over whether the children of Abraham had been chosen to receive or chosen to contribute. Jesus was perfectly aware of all of this, but he believed that all communities of families known as nations derived their authority and their gifts from God. Remember, it was to Pilate he was talking; even the hated Roman Empire was, at its core, a community of families, and the hatred was only due to the fact that one community of families was trying to impose its will upon another.

There are large communities and small com-

munities, but who can speak of their relative worth? Historians now tell us that little Denmark is chiefly responsible for the legal background of American freedom. Switzerland has for centuries shown the world that peoples of differing religious confessions can live together in peace, equality and brotherly affection. Little Greece has trained the mind of Western man, and tiny Israel has been the mother of Christianity and Islam. Individual little kingdoms and duchies in what is now Italy produced the aesthetics which are still our criteria. The illustrations are endless. The point involved is that population numbers, physical resources and armed might are not the standards whereby national contribution may be measured.

God not only gave nations certain gifts, but he gave them particular areas in which these gifts might develop. I can only be a citizen of the world, which I should be, if I am first and foremost a citizen of the country where I was born. We are not talking about a statement such as, my country, right or wrong, but rather, my country, which I love so much I cannot bear to have her wrong.

Responsibility for the misuse of power lies

heavily upon the state. The just powers derived from the governed are still supposed to be just. Responsibility for the misuse of power, however, lies more heavily on the religious authorities who urge its misuse. The ancient notion that the Church is a nation at prayer gives dread responsibility to the people who are responsible for the nation's conscience.

Religious leaders are supposed to be prophets, people who forthtell the will of God. God seems little concerned with "advantageousness." His hand in history is doom writ large over those, who for larger good, will indulge a minor injustice. Religion cannot be the holy water asperged over the state's every action, but, on the other hand, it cannot act as though the nation, when it is being a nation, is being an evil thing, and only approaching being a good thing when it is at prayer with all due submission to church government.

Greece and the Scandinavian countries are, since the iron curtain has fallen, the only Christian nations left, at the moment, in which the church is the nation ecclesiastically considered and vice versa. To be Greek means to be Orthodox.

To be Danish means to be Lutheran. Greece exists as a nation only because faithful priests of her ancient church have kept a nation's heart alive in the bodies of enslaved, depressed and tortured people. The theory that a particular church is, of necessity, the creature of the state which establishes it was disproved totally in Norway and Denmark during World War II. Byzantine and Celtic history have important contributions to make on this subject.

The only illustration which matters, however, is that drawn from personal experience. Has or has not my country, as such, anything to contribute to the welfare of the world? Can my country contribute anything if it lacks integrity? Can my country have integrity if it lacks a sense of destiny? Can destiny mean anything less than power from above to do a certain job?

None knew better than Jesus what power was all about. Power belongs to God, and a terrible responsibility rests upon all those to whom he entrusts it. I cannot lift a sick man without physical power. I cannot defend the weak without moral power. I cannot protect the innocent without politi-

cal power or police power. The ramifications are endless. The one thing to remember, however, is that the only man in history who could be entrusted with unlimited power turned it down as the worst temptation of the devil.



THEN SAID JESUS unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?

Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home. After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon a spear and put it to his mouth. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

»» XI ««

Human Splendor

ONE OF THE curious assumptions of good people is that they think they can understand perfect humanity. Perfect humanity, in the long run, is no easier for man to understand than perfect divinity, for one is in the image of the other.

St. John's account of the Passion rings much truer to the total character of Jesus than any of the other Gospel accounts. The other Gospels go in for a somewhat standard account of the agony in the garden, but St. John's version ignores the agony completely and puts it into a phrase like this: "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour." St. John's version rings true to the splendor of the character of Jesus, and the others, with all due respect, seem somehow

to be composed for our comfort. Lesser men are comforted by thoughts of the Lord with sweat like drops of blood falling from him, but the strange inconsistency is that the only possible witnesses to the scene are, by admission, asleep—asleep when they should have been watching and praying. Betrayal and a violent death did not come to Jesus as a surprise. He had known for a long time that both were inevitable were he to pursue the path he had chosen.

St. John's account is instinct with force. When Jesus had finished the supper and the great High Priestly prayer, he and his Disciples went over the brook, Cedron, to a garden and promptly Judas and the officers of the Chief Priests and Pharisees came with lanterns and torches and weapons. Jesus, knowing exactly what was going to happen, says, "Whom seek ye?" They say, "Jesus of Nazareth," and Jesus stands firmly and says, "I am he." The result was that the soldiers went backward and fell to the ground. This is not as miraculous as it might seem. Other men since that time have been equally discomfited by absolute honesty. The question and answer are again repeated, but

Jesus has to make certain that the Disciples are not arrested. The thoughtfulness which had gone into Jesus' planning showed itself. He had to die, but he had to be certain that, in dying, his friends did not perish with him. They had a work to do in the world; a work for which he had trained them, and nothing—not even sympathy and loyalty—must interfere with that work.

Peter, acting in his usual headstrong way, draws his sword and cuts off the right ear from one of the servants of the High Priest. An interesting little historical sidelight creeps in: the servant's name was Malchus. Then Jesus says to Peter, "Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" It was a terrible cup, and we must move on to see some of the things which were in it.

After conviction by denouncement, he is led out to be crucified. The uprights of the crosses were always out on the rocky hill of Golgotha. Condemned people had to carry their own crossbars. He carried his; a six-foot timber on a back cut open by the Roman whips. Crucifixion was a death by slow strangulation. The nails in the hand were

soul-shattering aggravations, but even they ceased to be important when the ropes started to do their work. On top of the long spike which held the crossbar was placed his accusation; a terrible accusation indeed: "Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews." The title was, of course, malicious on Pilate's part because it would irritate the Jews by its pretension and annoy them by its implications. The soldiers, as was their custom, divided up the spoils and sat down to wait for death.

By now, we have discovered a number of things in the cup: injustice, hatred, betrayal, malice, cruelty, irrational, senseless, agonizing pain. But there is more in the cup than that. His mother, his aunt, Mary Magdalene, and his best friend are standing there, all of them dying a thousand deaths for him, each one willing to be up there in his place, and each knowing the double torture of suffering with him, for him, and at the same time being unable to do anything about it.

This form of misery is something many of us have known. The only healing is more concern, more human responsibility—for his mother and for his friend. How many of us have been kept from the utter abyss of misery by the simple human

needs of others; children who still had to be washed and cared for, and animals that still had to be watered and fed. Yet it is a bitter dreg in the cup to see the agony of those who love you.

There was something much more than physical agony going on up there on the cross. We must never be trivial about human suffering, and crucifixion is a hideous thing, but at the same time we have to face frankly the fact that other men in other places have suffered far more hideous things, and for much longer periods of time. The real problem is the testing which love undergoes in the face of senseless and hideous pain. It is an under-estimation of the tempter to imagine that having met Jesus once, he thereafter decided never to bother him again. The cross is only the triumph of love because it is its ultimate test.

Christians have long been aware that more was going on up there than we will ever understand. In the words of a most beloved hymn, "We may not know, we cannot tell, what pains he had to bear." Now comes the tremendous cry, "I thirst." All things were now accomplished. If there is any more in the cup, he can take it.

One of the most moving sections of the Old

Testament is that which describes David's lament on the death of Absalom. The last sentence has the beauty of tragedy. "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" Absalom had been a treacherous and rebellious son, but in spite of that, David had, at this moment, felt a father's love. Jesus had managed to give the Father's love perfect expression. Great David's greater son could well have cried, "Through God, I am dying for thee, O Caiaphas, my son, my son!" You can substitute any name you want for the High Priest's—Pilate, Judas, Peter, Nicodemus, Edward—for it is the love of a universe and the compassion and forgiveness of God expressed to any and every individual. No man took his life from him. He laid it down of himself. He had the power to lay it down.

It was now all done, save for one thing; love could not ignore the group of pious and gentle Hebrew people who, as agents of mercy, went out to assuage the dreadful thirst which accompanied crucifixion. They, of course, would not understand this cry, "I thirst," so with plodding goodness they

fill a sponge with vinegar, put it on a spear and put it to his mouth. They, too, had to be loved.

After this, he says, "It is finished," he bows his head, and gives up his spirit. He, the victim in the drama, has become the master of it. This is the true paschal sacrifice; not a little animal which had no choice, but the mighty Lamb of God, who could have stopped the dread process at any moment, but went through it all, the utter gift of love for us men and for our salvation.

This is human splendor; life outpoured gladly that men might see, and know, and live.

Foreign crosses, other men's merits are not mine; spontaneous and voluntary crosses, contracted by mine own sins, are not mine; neither are devious, and remote, and unnecessary crosses, my crosses. Since I am bound to take up my cross, there must be a cross that is mine to take up; that is, a cross prepared for me by God, and laid in my way, which is temptations or tribulations in my calling; and I must not go out of my way to seek a cross; for, so it is not mine, nor laid for my taking up. I am not bound to hunt after a persecution, nor to stand it, and not fly, nor to affront a plague, and

not remove, nor to open my self to an injury, and not defend. I am not bound to starve my self by inordinate fasting, nor to tear my flesh by inhuman whippings, and flagellations. I am bound to take up my Cross; and that is only mine which the hand of God hath laid for me, that is, in the way of my Calling, temptations and tribulations incident to that.

John Donne, *Sermon LXXII*



THE FIRST DAY of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre. Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him. . . . But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre, And seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him. And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take

him away. . . . Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God. Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her. Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord. Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.

But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe. And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said,

Peace be unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.

» XII «

Human Triumph

THE RESURRECTION is not only the triumph of light over darkness in the person of Light, but the same process in lesser folk. There is no reason in a book of meditations to discuss the arguments for the Resurrection. A person reads this sort of book only because he already knows the Resurrection to be true.

There are, however, several points which must be borne in mind. One is that in all the Gospels, including this one, it is not expected that the Resurrection will take place before the end of the world, and, two, that the resurrected Lord is never recognized by sight. St. Paul, in writing of the Resurrection body, makes it perfectly clear that the glorified body is a spiritual body bearing the image of the heavenly rather than of the earthy.

The first mention of the Resurrection in St. John's Gospel is the touching account of Mary Magdalene's visit to the tomb. It is now about a day and a half after the crucifixion. Very early in the morning, Mary has come to complete the burial preparations which had been interrupted by the Sabbath. The tomb is empty and two persons, whom St. John says are angels, sat where the head and feet of the body of Jesus had lain. To Mary they would have seemed like ordinary men. She is weeping because it seems that another needless cruelty has been added. They have taken away even the body of her Lord.

One must note that it is the ministry of angels to act as messengers, and Mary Magdalene, who had been so distressed to find the tomb empty, now had the preparatory question asked her, "Why are you crying?" It is often the very insistence of a question which prepares one to receive the answer.

She turns, and a man whom she supposes to be a gardener asks her the question again. She can only give halting speech to her concern, If you have moved the body, tell me where it is and I will take him away. He had, of course, moved the body,

but not in the sense she thought. She would take him away, but not in the way she thought. Jesus says to her, "Mary." She knows the voice and the intimate pronunciation of her own name, and turns to him, saying, "Great Master." Perhaps the beauty of the original speech even now gives a better idea, "Rabboni."

She reaches in natural human affection to touch him. But Jesus stops her. The phrase, "Touch me not," is probably better translated, "Don't hold me." How often we have tried to hold people in human affection, only to discover that we were holding them back. The pull of human need is still so strong. It is only because Jesus is ascending to the Father that he can thereafter be with Mary always. After the Ascension, there is no more separation again forever.

She immediately went back to tell the disciples, whom he calls by the tender name, "my brethren," that he is ascending to his Father and theirs, to his God and theirs. On the same day in the evening, when the disciples were assembled for their supper, Jesus comes and stands in the midst of them and utters the characteristic Hebrew greeting,

“Peace,” and when he has so said, he shows them his hands and his side. The disciples, having been assured by his greeting, still only recognize him from his wounds.

The presence of Jesus associated with a meal held by his brethren is the universal religious experience of the New Testament. It is St. John’s form of the knowing him in the breaking of bread. It is only the damaged body which could be glorified. It is only the broken bread which could serve him. It is after seeing the wounds that they are glad, for it is only by the wounds they know him.

If one were to try to construct a symbol representative of St. John’s thinking, it would have to be something like a cross growing into a crown. It is not a case of carrying one’s cross here in order that it may be exchanged for a crown elsewhere, but rather, of carrying a cross here which will, of itself, grow into a crown later.

In the body of the glorified Lord are still the dread marks of the cross. This must always color our own attitude toward our own sufferings. These sufferings may be very great, or they may be very little, but, as crosses of our own, they are instru-

ments of service both to God and to man. The patient endurance of affliction is truly noble, but it is still not enough. It must be evangelical in its concern. My pain increases my sensitivity to the pain of others, or I am wearing the cross, no matter how dreadful, as some form of personal decoration.

Stoicism is a noble thing, but it is still something less than Christianity. We would, possibly, not go as far as Father Yelchaninov, who was always embarrassed by prayers for the recovery of a sick person, since sickness could be of such enormous service to Christ; but on the other hand, we must not dismiss lightly the abiding wounds which have served him so well.

There is still no form of preaching or reading which can make up for personal knowledge. This shows up so quickly in a sickroom or in the presence of a great sorrow. The healthy young man who has never known hurt or pain is often so ineffective in dealing with the pained and hurt. Yet, some other man, generally much older, who may possess only half the younger man's ability and energy, will come in and minister the rich gifts of Christ, because the patients know that he knows.

It is the paradox we mentioned before. Christians, who go out of their way to avoid giving people additional crosses and do all in their power to heal others' hurt, recognize full well that Christianity is the taking up of one's own cross and following Jesus. There are going to be wounds, but it is only by his wounds that his compassion is known.

Thomas the Twin was not with them when Jesus had come to them. He had not heard words sending him forth even as the Father had sent Jesus forth. For him it was all too good to be true. He is a factual man and is determined not to believe anything which does not make itself evident to him. He distrusts all wishful thinking and, therefore, refuses to believe his best friends when they tell him something which he wishes were true, but which, as yet, he has no personal reason to believe.

The Bishop of Kurunegala has remarked that it is not for nothing that St. Thomas is the patron saint of India and the reputed founder of Indian Christianity. The Indians will only recognize Jesus as the incarnate Lord when they are sure of his

wounds. A Lord with no knowledge of the world's pain could be no Lord to the Indian.

Jesus comes again to his brethren and this time Thomas is with them. Jesus utters the Shalom and then says to Thomas, "Put your finger in the nail prints. Put your hand in my side and be not faithless, but believing." Thomas, of course, does neither; he just utters the basic text of this whole Gospel, "My Lord and my God."

"The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us. . . . And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace" was part of the prologue, but the full meaning of it comes out now. It is the staggering claim of Christianity that one can look at Jesus of Nazareth and know exactly what God is like. It is the realization of his sentence to Philip, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," that which in hymn form was written, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." This is the statement of faith which is the stumbling block to the Hebrew and nonsense to the pagan. But no matter how difficult it is, it is the Christian religion around which the whole New

Testament was written, to which the entire Old Testament points, and from which all Christian holiness has been derived.

Take this phrase and reapply it to the references made to Jesus in this gospel. You will see the point immediately. For example: "Then answered the Jews, and said unto him, Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?"; "Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?"; or, "Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him."

The point of the passion is, who is suffering? The point of the incarnation, indeed, is just who it was "who for us men and for our salvation" was made man. It is only from this background that we can start to understand human triumph. The Resurrection was triumph for Mary Magdalene, for John, and Peter, and Thomas. It is triumph for all those who have not seen and yet have believed.

All that we know of Jesus we learn, roughly, in three ways. First, we learn from the things handed down about him, of which Holy Scripture is the

normative record. Second, we learn from those who know him and are in communion with him. But third, we learn by direct knowledge. However inadequate I be as his servant, however ineffectual my ministry in his behalf, I still could not even claim the title I may dishonor unless I were able to say, of my own knowledge, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." Christianity is nothing less than personal knowledge of the glorified and ascended Lord, a knowledge lived out in the fellowship of the Holy Company. This is victory, this is triumph, this is life eternal, entered upon here and now.

The cry of "Peace" so characteristic of Jesus had now taken on an entirely new connotation. Peace to the Hebrew had always conveyed something totally different from that which the word conveyed to a Greek. To the Greek, peace meant cessation of warfare, whereas, to the Hebrew peace meant the fruits of victory. It was the active spirit which made it possible for men to live happily with their families. The prophets had managed to take away any notion of ordinary security from the word. From the earliest to the latest days of its Hebrew usage, peace has been regarded as the gift

of God—whether it is after a thunderstorm, or after the ministry of the Suffering Servant, it makes no difference.

Peace is still the ability to live out one's life fully in one's family, in one's nation, and in one's world. Jesus had used the word often in his discourses: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you." But it is only the Resurrection which gives the word its full connotation. His peace indeed! It is small wonder that St. Paul said that the peace of God passed human understanding. It is not as the world gives. Peace is the fruit of righteousness, and righteousness is Jesus.

"Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God." The questions are obvious: What kind of peace are we talking about? How can one be a peacemaker? The ordinary citizen in every country wants peace, wants it passionately, wants it at almost any price—except at the price which is its inevitable cost. Peace, as it works out in most of us in the rare moments when we know it, is the serenity which comes from an absolute conviction that God is always the vic-

tor. It is something which can be known in the midst of trouble, turmoil, and strife, which has been the quietness of great soldiers, something which can manifest itself even upon a cross.

Peace can never turn out to be universal tolerance if there are things which are, frankly, intolerable. Jesus was not tolerant about the corruption of the young. Jesus was not tolerant of the house of God being turned into a market place. Jesus was never tolerant of evil. To be at peace does not mean to be in the state of moral relaxation.

Peace does not mean invariable gentleness, or inevitable kindness as the world understands that word. To permit a little child to tear off a bird's wings is not a kindness to the child. To permit unscrupulous men to exploit others is not kindness either to the others or to the unscrupulous men. Peace does not mean spineless acquiescence.

Peace is not the fruit of riches and plenty. I may have no earthly care and yet get along with my family so badly that I never know peace. Peace is not the same thing as prosperity.

God's peace is the inner serenity which comes from the right convictions about him, convictions

which come as the gift of the Holy Spirit. We cannot think ourselves into a state of peace. We can only accept peace as the gift of God. St. Paul often uses the word as though it were synonymous with love. One of the great postexilic Psalms treated it in the lovely imagery, "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other."

All of this is hinting at it. Some of the negative phrases have told what it was not like. Some of the positive ones have hinted at the way it works, but what produced it was the meeting of time and timelessness, of the transcendent and immanent God, in the crucified and resurrected Jesus. Our peace was wrought in the head-on collision of judgment and love. My scientific friends assure me that the old-time question, What happens when an irresistible force meets an immovable wall? is no longer unanswerable. Both are changed into something new. This is how our peace was won.

If one were to ask, What was the chief proof of the Resurrection? the answer could not be either the writings of St. Paul or of the gospels. The chief proof of the Resurrection is the sudden

transition of a frightened little group of men, defeated and disillusioned, into a glorious band of heroes who, a few days later, went out to proclaim to all the world that their crucified leader had triumphed gloriously, that he was truly risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept. And their Lord was truly risen, it was not like the raising of the shade of Samuel, nor was it just one more evidence of the immortality of the soul; it was the triumph of all created things in men. An earthy body becomes a glorified body, and all the misery and torture and testing which that earthy body had known was now glorified to the right hand of God himself.

It is the triumph of the risen Lord and knowledge of the peace which he has to give to all creation which is the good news of the gospel. This is what we are commissioned to preach to all the world. But how do we preach it? How do we become peacemakers?

Our words on the subject will fall on very deaf ears unless our actions carry the conviction of personal application. I must, first and foremost, be at peace with my own brethren. Even in my own

petty sphere judgment and love are going to meet in head-on collision and something has to give. The answer is obvious, I am the thing that has to give; I am the one who must absorb the hurt and the friction.

It is easy to be factually right and morally wrong. It is simple and often very attractive to tell the little lie now in order to proclaim the great truth later. These attitudes are part and parcel of human relationships. I will gain nothing for God by ignoring either the rightness of the facts and the great truth on one hand, nor the moral wrong and the little lie on the other. Lecturing my brethren for their faults, or praising them for their virtues, when neither are a complete picture, is not going to do much good. I just have to love my brethren with Christ's consuming "agape" and so absorb each man's hurt into myself that neither has resentment left for the other. Left to myself, I cannot do any of this, but he who left us his peace can still make his peace triumph through the least profitable of his servants.

This peace, however, is not just a noble, aching thing. On the contrary, it is the only true joy

there is. It is excitement and splendor passing human understanding.

I wish, somehow, I could at this moment reproduce in writing the bursting, dynamic sound of a great Russian choir thundering forth the Respond of Easter. I feel terribly the need of music, for glory moves from prose to poetry, from poetry to song, and from song, finally, to the only thing which I can reproduce—silence. When all the sounds are out of the way, and the distractions of beauteous trappings have merged in the middle distance, there he stands, he of the glorified wounds, my Lord and my God.



AND MANY OTHER SIGNS *truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.*

This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true. And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.

» XIII «

Human Nature

THE CLOSING passages of the Gospel are all the more moving for being so restrained. The book has been pulled together out of the only knowledge there is, firsthand knowledge. Jesus did and said many other things which are not included in this book.

One often hears people object that there are so few Resurrection accounts included in the Bible. This is to miss the point completely. There was so much material available, that to include any more of them would have been to give an improper balance to the whole sweep of the Incarnation. It would be a poor picture of Christianity which presented it either as an endless Easter, or as an endless Christmas, or as an endless Good Friday. Jesus came to minister to the whole of our lives,

but our own lives are never unending periods of any one of these three.

It is commonly said that each man born into the world must, in the course of his life, pass through all the stages of the history of mankind. Whether this be true or not in ontogeny, it is most certainly true in religion, but with this one strange difference: Jesus is the pattern of all we are ever going to be. He is, therefore, the criterion by which we assess man. The answers are all there. We just have to ask the right questions: What is man? What is man in relationship to his family, his friends, his country, his church, and his God?

Jesus is man, true man, the original blueprint by which all men are measured. He is the normal man. We are just average men. We must, therefore, consider with some care what perfect manhood can manage to include. It can, and does, include human affection. It includes gaiety and human pleasure, but it also includes some other things. It includes being misunderstood by the friends and the family one loves. It includes being misinterpreted and maligned by one's enemies.

Too often we forget that this gospel, which is

regarded as the most patently theological of the four, is the one which shows the manhood of Jesus so thoroughly. He was hungry, he thirsted, he knew what it was to have pressure put on. He knew the indignity of having to hide. He suffered frustration. He groaned, and wept. He knew what it was to be troubled in spirit. He knew what it was to be betrayed, to be stripped and mocked. He knew what it was to be tortured. He knew death.

These are the things which hurt the souls and bodies of men. These are the things which, at their very utmost depths, mark the path of Light through darkness. Remember, the problem is not the darkness. That is a fact, not a problem. The problem is, what do we do about it? Apart from the Resurrection, of course, there is not any answer at all. We can not do anything about it. But man in Jesus knew the Resurrection.

What then is man? Man is a pitifully small, earthy thing whose soul and body have eternal significance.

This lofty Gospel, so moving in its majesty and breadth, is at the same time the one most concerned with the ordinary things of life—flesh,

marriage, bread, and wine. This is the material out of which Jesus fashions eternity. What I do with each, or any, or all of these things has eternal significance.

St. John has learned from Jesus that the universe and everything in it is capable of serving God as the medium of his grace. We live in a world in which everything with which our senses, our minds, our hearts can cope is useful to God's redemptive love. It is when we realize this that we start to understand a saint's compassionate and tender love of all creation. The endless miracle is how creation responds to that love. The green thumb, for example, involves much more than horticultural skill. Think what the *Benedicite* means to one who has learned the lesson St. John has learned. O all ye works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord! Heavens, sun and moon, stars, winter and summer, light and darkness, mountains and hills, green things upon the earth, whales and all that move in the waters, fowls of the air, beasts and cattle, children of men, bless ye the Lord.

Man is not some detached, remote thing. He is a living temple of the spirit of God moving in

relationship with his fellow man and all creation. Thus, the same man may be at one and the same time, a son, a father, a brother, an uncle, a grandfather, a husband, a friend. He may be a man with a dog, a man with a garden. He may be a man with a business. He is a townsman, and a citizen of a great country at the same time. All of these things which one man may be, involve relationships through which God's redemptive love is endlessly manifest.

Man is also, along with all of this, the child of God, capable of being a joint heir with Christ himself, capable of the incredible boldness of calling the power behind the universe "Father." Jesus is the answer to the searching questions each man must face, Who am I? What am I? Where am I going?

The beloved disciple himself is one of the first fruits of the spirit. He is traditionally the outstanding example of the once-born man.

Of late, we have heard much about twice-born men. Nowadays, no one questions the validity of conversions. Great and sincere evangelists have done lasting and glorious work for Christ. No

longer is it easily assumed that conversion is just some easy and rather superficial form of emotionalism substituting itself for religion. Some of the valid work done for Christ in our own day has been just as much intellectual conversion as emotional conversion. Man has both mind and emotion and it is only when these two get out of proper adjustment that we get the sickening mockery of sentimentality.

There always have been, and there always will be, St. Pauls, St. Francises, and Wesleys, and they are, and always will be, ministers of the God mighty to save. St. John is not one of the men going through this climactic kind of experience.

It is clear from his writing that St. John has full respect for such experience and in no way underestimates it. His account of Nicodemus and his use of the word "spirit" make it clear that he understands thoroughly how such things work and how necessary they can be. He himself is a different sort. He is the kind who progresses, little by little, slowly and surely, from the cradle to the grave and beyond. He is often deeply moved. He is extraordinarily sensitive to other people's feel-

ings. He has the gentleness of enormous strength and utter conviction, never dull, not unduly acquiescent, totally dependable—and he was the Lord's best friend.

Possibly, in an age frantic with energy and riddled with fear of what that energy can do, the calm reasonableness of St. John is one of God's most useful ministries. It is the ministry which John Keble described this way:

*If on our daily course our mind
Be set to hallow all we find,
New treasures still, of countless price,
God will provide for sacrifice.*

*Old friends, old scenes, will lovelier be
As more of heav'n in each we see;*

.

*The trivial round, the common task,
Will furnish all we ought to ask.*

This ministry does much to help people understand the fruit of the spirit. St. Paul describes the fruit as being love, joy, peace, long-suffering,

gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. How beautiful the words themselves sound to ears long accustomed to wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like.

The point of it all, however, is not the beauty of the sound, but the astonishing fact that these things can be ours. At the beginning of the day and at its end, he is there who has known all our trials. We can, in the spirit, hear the words which St. Andrew of Crete puts in his lips, "Well I know thy trouble, O my servant true; thou art very weary, I was weary, too." But we must be careful to recognize the difference between compassion and commiseration. He who knows our troubles is also the Joyous Radiance. He it is who can make my littleness serve his greatness. He it is who will, if I will let him, give me his peace, his strength. I must not be proud and assume that he will help me only if a great task lies ahead. There is no difference to him between individual men and great nations.

We make a great mistake in permitting our prayers to be troubled. It would be better that we

approach him each day even as any good servant comes to learn the mind of his lord and master.

*Show thou me that which thou wouldst have me
to do;*

Show thou me the way of thy doing;

Help thou me and thou shalt have it done.

